

ATTRIBUTES AND CHARACTERISTICS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESSFUL
FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

By

Linda K. Rouleau-Carroll

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Dissertation Committee:
Jan Walker, Ph.D., Chair
Dave Darnell, Ph.D.
Pam Vogel, Ph.D.

Dean of the School of Education
Janet M. McMahon, Ph.D.

Drake University
Des Moines, Iowa
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Dedication

To all women who continue to advance personally, educationally, and professionally in spite of
the seen and unseen barriers encountered.

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Abstract

The current research indicates that gender underrepresentation in upper management is a broad, global issue. According to data from the Iowa Department of Education (2010), most female principals (50.4%) are at the elementary level while only 23.7% female principals are at the secondary level and 76.3% males. The underrepresentation of females can be noted in business, the armed forces, higher education, around the world, and in public education. Limited research has been done on women in educational leadership, with even less in regard to women leadership at the secondary level. Based on the large number of females represented in the teaching occupation, it would seem logical that the proportion of female leaders in education would be reflective of the profession as a whole, whether it is at the elementary, secondary level, or central office. Through the lens of Critical Feminist Theory and multiple case qualitative design, this researcher examined the lives and experiences of four women who have maintained successful and effective careers in secondary education. By gathering in-depth information of actual successful secondary female principals the researcher was able to add to the current literature and accomplish four objectives: (a) Create an awareness of the skill set, style, and background needed that allows a female educator to consider and pursue a secondary principalship, (b) Offer necessary information for female educators who pursue a secondary principalship to be aware and prepared for the obstacles and challenges they will encounter, (c) Encourage females who fear advancement in secondary education due to stereotypes and/or leave the profession due to negative experiences, and (d) Provide substantive information to administrator preparation programs that will assist in designing instruction to support women interested in becoming secondary principals.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Much has been written about women and leadership over the last thirty years. Since the beginning of the women's movement in the 1970s women have been making inroads into career fields that have historically been impenetrable to females. Take a look around and you will see successful women in all arenas. Women like Michelle Obama, Melinda Gates, Oprah Winfrey, and Hillary Clinton are just a few listed in Forbes (2012) as powerful, based on their visibility and economic impact. Viewing successful women in these various career areas might cause some to believe the gender equity gap may be a non-issue in the United States. According to Besen & Kimmel (2006) women comprise 66% of the U.S. workforce, yet only 21% hold middle management positions and a mere 15% are at the senior management level. Some scholars articulate that the disproportionate numbers of women in management positions are due to the "glass ceiling," popularized by Hymowitz and Schellhart a term, in a Wall Street Journal front page article (1986). The phrase attempts to describe the invisible barriers women encounter when trying to advance to the top in their chosen career. The disproportional representation of women in managerial positions is also referred to as the "sticky floor," which is keeping women in lower paying jobs. No matter the term, the fact is that fewer women are represented in upper management positions (Bible & Hill, 2007).

Over the last 50 years numerous laws have been passed to address overt gender discrimination. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and amended in 1991, the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the Fair Housing Act of 1968, Title IX passed in the 1970s, just to name a few, have all attempted to tackle the issue of equity, disproportionality, and underrepresentation of women in all areas. In spite of the laws passed and gender gaps closing, the data indicate an ongoing

problem. The presence and effects of gender inequity tend to be underestimated or overlooked causing people to perceive that all workplaces are gender neutral (Sipe, Fisher & Johnson, 2009).

The current research indicates that gender underrepresentation in upper management is a broad, global issue. Deeply entrenched gender stereotypes in many cultures impede career choice and advancement of females in all fields. According to the research of McTavish and Miller (2009) in the United Kingdom, female interviewees' perceptions of progression to more senior leadership positions become less attractive because of the potential conflict with a work-life balance. In Turkey there is a disproportionate ratio of female to male administrators in public schools, although women prevail in total numbers in the teaching profession, men are more prevalent in administration. The gains in top Turkish leadership positions have been modest and uneven in all administrative positions (Celikten, 2010). In Uganda, women administrators in secondary high schools charged with creating a student-friendly climate and creating a collaborative community are faced with a high percentage of male teachers' adhering to traditional subordinate gender roles assigned to women (Sperandio and Kagoda, 2011).

The persistence of gender discrimination has been evident in all career areas, including education (Sipe, Fisher & Johnson, 2009). According to the 2010 Condition of Education Report published by the Iowa Department of Education, the teaching profession is 75% female. Combining the number of elementary and secondary principals, males and females, there are 1,164 principal positions. The chart below offers a glimpse at principal gender within public education in the state of Iowa.

Table 42

GENDER COMPARISON OF IOWA FULL-TIME PUBLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS 2009-2010		
Characteristics	Female	Male
Average Age	48.1	46.1
Percent Minority	3.3%	2.7%
Percent Advanced Degree	88.2%	83.7%
Average Total Experience	21.7	20.9
Average District Experience	11.0	9.0
Number of Principals	448	716

Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Planning, Research, Development and Evaluation Services, Basic Educational Data Survey, Staff files.

Note: Include AEA principals.

Statement of the Problem

It becomes apparent when reviewing the above data that female principals in Iowa tend to be older, have more advanced degrees, more total years of experience, and more district experience. There are also more female minorities represented. At first glance, the number of female principals appears to be about 38%, however, upon further investigation and disaggregation of data from the Iowa Department of Education (2010), most female principals (50.4%) are at the elementary level while only 23.7% female principals are at the secondary level and 76.3% males.

Based on the large number of females represented in the teaching occupation, it would seem logical that the proportion of female leaders in education would be reflective of the profession as a whole, whether it is at the elementary, secondary level, or central office. Because of my own experience and the disaggregated data above, I am interested in the limited number of females represented in secondary principalships and will explore the various reasons for this phenomenon in the disproportionality.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore a veiled story – the story of how the glass ceiling impacts a unique population, women principals in secondary education. Very little has been written about this population, in spite of the fact that education is predominately female, few are employed in positions of secondary principal.

According to Moreau, Osgood and Halsall (2007) schools have widely been described as “feminized” environments due to the statistical perspective of the general workforce. This statistic is not reflected in management or principal positions, however, and the under-representation of women is apparent. There appear to be barriers that avert females entering the principalship at the secondary level.

There has been recent research done on female leadership within the United States, although most of what is current and relevant focuses on business management, the armed forces, and higher education. Much of the literature on gender and principalships in the United States is somewhat dated, occurring twenty to thirty years ago. The specific and current literature focused exclusively on female principals comes from places such as Uganda, the United Kingdom, China, Canada, or Middle Eastern countries. There are, however, common themes and outcomes in the female leadership literature in all areas, current and dated. The results appear to be mirror images of what was collected in the United States between the 1970s and 1980s.

Data suggest the number of women in educational leadership positions are increasing but continue to be inequitable. What happens to women in secondary educational leadership? Are there barriers that hinder them from leadership positions or do they opt out? What are the

difficulties or challenges these women face in navigating the ladder to the top? What skill set or leadership style do they find helpful? What impeded their path to educational leadership?

The Rationale and Significance of the Study

Limited research has been done on women in educational leadership, with even less in regard to women leadership at the secondary level. Through the lens of a qualitative case study, the researcher examined the lives and experiences of four women who have maintained successful and effective careers in secondary education.

By gathering in-depth information of actual successful secondary female principals the researcher was able to add to the current literature and accomplish four objectives:

1. Create an awareness of the skill set, style, and background needed allowing a female educator to consider and pursue a secondary principalship
2. Offer the necessary information for female educators who pursue a secondary principalship to be aware of and prepared for the obstacles and challenges they may encounter
3. Encourage females who fear advancement in secondary education due to stereotypes and/or leave the profession due to negative experiences
4. Provide substantive information to administrator preparation programs that will assist in designing instruction to support women interested in becoming secondary principals.

Research Questions

A key part of the qualitative research study is the development of a grand tour question (Yin, 2010), which establishes a broad topic without the threat of researcher bias with regards to questioning. The grand tour question that guided the work in this study was, “What are the

common characteristics of women in secondary principal positions who have managed to survive and who sustain a successful and effective career in secondary education?” It was the researcher’s hope that, by asking this question, an understanding of the skills, styles, and background that contribute to the success of female leaders in secondary education would be acquired.

In addition to the grand tour question (Yin, 2010), there were two main research questions and five procedural subquestions (Creswell, 2007) pursued to illicit greater in-depth answers from the interview participants. Through the use of procedural subquestions (Creswell, 2007), I was able to identify major concerns and issues underlying the topic of study.

1. Did the participants in this study, who were secondary principals, encounter similar experiences articulated in the current research related to being a female secondary principal?
2. Were there common or similar skills and strategies the female participants implemented that attributed to their successful tenure as a secondary principal?

In the process of looking at the experiences of these women in relation to glass ceiling and stereotyping literature, this study gave voice to their overall stories. Through their own words, this study explored five subsequent issues (Creswell, 2007).

1. How were their lives and careers affected by their experiences of being a female secondary principal and what contributed to their success as an educational leader?
2. What has been the most difficult area to navigate as a female leader in secondary education?
3. What are the characteristics that are uniquely female that contribute, influence, impact, or make a difference in a leadership role?

4. What are the characteristics that create roadblocks or hinder female leaders?
5. What are areas or questions that were not asked and should be addressed?

The researcher used the women's official interviews and biographical information.

The interviews were conducted using specifically developed questions to gather focused and insightful information on their backgrounds in education, their life experiences, obstacles encountered during their journey of leadership, skills that contributed to success in the field, and what, if any, glass ceiling experiences or gender discrimination they perceive.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

An assumption is something taken for granted, a belief without proof, or an unproven starting point. The assumptions for this study were:

- The selected group of women secondary principals would be agreeable to face-to-face interviews.
- Women who successfully navigated the secondary principalship did so because they implemented a skill set allowing them to persist in a predominately male environment.
- The researcher believes institutionalized barriers contribute to the underrepresentation of women in the position of secondary principal.
- Women who made a conscious decision to opt out of the position did so because of the continual barriers and/or stereotypes encountered.

Limitation

Limitations are anything beyond the control of the researcher that may affect the internal validity of the study. The limitations of this study were:

- The participants in this study are representative of all women secondary principals who have been employed in a public or private secondary school.
- Since this study involved former female secondary principals, some of the participants may have viewed their experiences in a more positive light and described their career less than accurate.
- Since this study involved current female secondary principals, some of the participants may view and communicate their experiences in a guarded fashion, cautious regarding the impact on their current career.
- The primary researcher was also the interviewer for this study. The researcher did not want to lead the participants or corrupt the findings of the study based on pre-conceived ideas or experiences.

Delimitations

Delimitations are factors within the researcher's control that may affect the external validity of the study. The delimitations of this study were:

- This study used a population selected from women in a Midwest state, which may not have been a valid or representative sample of women secondary principals.
- The study was limited to 4 interviews of women principals serving in public and private school districts in one Midwest state.
- The size and demographics of districts varied and may not be transferable.

Definition of Terms

Agentic traits: Relates to social role theory, which asserts that the behavior of men and women is governed by stereotypes of their social roles. Males developed traits that manifest agency such as the inclination to be independent, assertive, and competent.

Barrier: Something that blocks access or obstructs; a blockade or impediment.

Conceptual man: The perception, thought or understanding of what a man is

Critical Feminist Theory: Examines the power relationships between and among groups through the lens of gender.

Discrimination: is the prejudicial and/or distinguishing treatment of an individual based on their actual or perceived membership in a certain group or category.

Double-bind: This refers to an individual (or group) that receives two or more conflicting messages, in which one message negates the other.

External Barrier: Existing barricades, blockades or obstructions that stop a person from doing a particular thing.

Feminized: To make something suitable for women.

Gatekeepers: It is the process through which a person(s) controls access to something; information is filtered or controlled for dissemination; activities include among others, selection, addition, withholding, display, channeling, shaping, manipulation, repetition, timing, localization, integration, disregard, of information.

Glass Ceiling: This is a political term used to describe the unseen, yet unbreakable barriers that keep minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements.

Good Ol' Boy Network: A series of contacts (relatives, friends, friends of friends, etc.) an informal system by which money and power are retained by wealthy white men. It is not necessarily purposeful or malicious but the network traditionally excludes women and minorities and can prevent them from being truly successful in the business world.

Hegemonic masculinity: Is the gender practice that guarantees the dominant social position of men, and the subordinate social position of women.

Hypermasculine: Is a psychological term for the exaggeration of male stereotypical behavior, such as an emphasis on physical strength, aggression, and sexuality.

Internal Barrier: Inner emotional and thought processes that stop a person from doing a particular thing.

Leadership: Ability to lead, direct, or manage, the office or position of leader

Marginalization: To relegate or confine to a lower or outer limit or edge, as of social standing; prevent from having attention or power

Skewed: To give a bias to; distort; distorted or biased in meaning or effect; a tilted or inaccurate position.

Stereotype: Oversimplified conception, reduce somebody to oversimplified category

Sticky Floor: Obstacles to women's advancements that are considered self-imposed career blocks that prevent women from moving up

Successful: With a record of significant achievements; as measured by attainment of goals

Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 includes the introduction and background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the rationale and significance of the study, the research questions, definition of terms, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature, which focuses on (a) cultural and societal influences on gender categories and segregation, (b) women in business management, (c) women in the armed forces, (d) women in higher education, (e) women around

the world, (f) women as superintendents, and (g) women as secondary principals. Chapter 3 presents information about the population sample and the methods and the analysis used for the study. Chapter 4 presents the finding of the study and Chapter 5 presents a summary of the finding, conclusions, and a discussion with suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

To acquire a deeper understanding of female attributes that contribute to their success as a secondary principal, it is necessary to examine the pertinent literature, which is essential for several reasons.

Creswell (2007) explains that literature reviews aid the researcher in a number of ways: (a) the literature review reaffirms the importance of, or the need for, the study that is being conducted, (b) it helps explain gaps in the existing literature that will be filled as a result of the present study, (c) “it provides a framework for establishing the importance of the study as well as a benchmark for comparing the results with other findings” (p.25), (d) it provides the rationale for the problem, and (e) it establishes the researcher’s study within the realm of the current literature on the topic.

Galvin (2009) further articulates that the literature review (a) demonstrates that the researcher has a thorough command of the field that is being investigated or examined, and (b) provides the reader of the research with a comprehensive and up-to-date review of the topic.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) present further details about the literature review process being enhanced when the person doing the research spends time in the field before reviewing the literature. The past and present experiences of the research study in educational administration have given the background and familiarity to better understand the literature related to this topic.

Boote & Biele (2005) assert that the literature review should be a thorough and sophisticated precondition resulting in substantive, thorough, and sophisticated research. “Good research is good because it advances our collective understanding” (p. 3). This can only be

accomplished if the researcher is aware of previous literature, and the strengths and weaknesses of existing studies.

The review of the literature related to this topic includes a history of women in society and the experiences of women in all facets of the workplace: business, the armed forces, higher education, countries around the world, and administration in education. The literature articulates the impact of gender on women in leadership, women as leaders in education, the glass ceiling, and the balancing and/or priorities women place on home and work.

Sexual Segregation: Categories and Stereotypes

For almost a century constitutional amendments, federal laws, and congressional votes have argued, defended, and drastically changed the manner in which women are accepted into society and the workplace. Laws have been created and mandated in an attempt to eliminate gender discrimination in all facets of life. While there have been inroads made in career fields that were once impenetrable to females, it appears that what once was overt and blatant discrimination demonstrated towards females has gone underground. According to Cohen (2008), “decades later, sex segregation is alive and well and persists in almost every walk of life” (p. 510). The general perceptions of current inequities, stereotyping, and misconceptions based on gender have morphed into subtle and indecipherable barriers. The unseen or unobserved factors and/or variables that contribute to this accepted and enduring issue in the present day job market continue to exist.

Cohen (2008) argues that sex segregation is everywhere and exists in a variety of ways in American law and society. Despite constitutional laws and protections that have been implemented against sex segregation, it continues to persist in almost every walk of life:

employment, education, criminal justice, the military, restrooms, social organizations, athletics, religion, and more.

Cohen (2008) suggests that there are four categories of sex segregation evident in the United States: mandatory, administrative, permissive, and voluntary. The four categories are deeply rooted in our culture, and society has accepted them as the established norm.

1. Mandatory sex segregation is one that is required by law. It can be required in public or private setting. It is the most visible and occurs in organizations like the military, the criminal justice system, the medical field, youth programs, elections, drug and alcohol programs, housing and schools.
2. Administrative sex segregation is one that the government carries out in an administrative capacity, although it is not required to do so by law. Examples of this are any type of government run building, such as courthouses, police and fire stations, and schools. This is discernable with segregated bathrooms, locker rooms, dressing rooms, and fraternity or sorority houses.
3. Permissive sex segregation occurs when the law explicitly permits sex segregation in a particular context. Similar to mandatory sex segregation, permissive sex segregation can occur in public or private settings. Permissive sex segregation occurs with explicit permission of the law. Employees are permitted to sex segregate positions if it is reasonably necessary. Jobs such as health attendants, prison guards, and even acting are prominent areas of permissive sex segregation.
4. Voluntary sex segregation is taken on by nongovernmental institutions and organizations without overt permission from the law to do so. These organizations and institutions are numerous but include groups like the Boy Scouts of America, Girl

Scouts of the USA, Academy Awards, in addition to numerous religions, recreations, and social clubs.

Cohen (2008) believes that sex segregation is not as pervasive and subordinating as race segregation in American history or current sex segregation in other countries, however; it clearly continues despite advances in sex discrimination laws and is evident in almost all walks of life.

Because of male-dominated jobs or masculine work cultures, women often face what is described as a “double-bind.” According to DeMaiter & Adams (2009) this occurs when women exhibit so-called male characteristics such as toughness and aggressiveness and at the same time demonstrate the traditional feminine expectations to avoid being derogated or criticized. In essence, this means that women function as “conceptual men” according to Snitow (1990). Women performing as conceptual men may withhold or deny their emotion, alter their clothing, and change their behavior; essentially masking their femininity. This may assist women in a male dominated environment but not without considerable strain, which can create feelings of marginalization, isolation, and hostility.

The feelings of marginalization, isolation, and hostility lead to another resulting issue and that is retaining women in the peak of their careers. Kaul (2009) observed because of work environments and dissatisfaction with the workplace experience, many women chose to quit their jobs. Most of the women interviewed attributed this decision to the inability to fit in with the “masculine” work culture. Sherman’s (2000) interviews conveyed women feeling that their suggestions were less important and they had feelings of being invisible while at meetings. Bhatnagar & Saxena’s (2009) research showed that workplace issues, such as dissatisfaction with work environment or lack of organizational support, was often a decisive factor for women to continue or quit their careers.

Several studies referred to terms such as gatekeepers and social networking, in the context of women advancing in their careers. Evetts (2000) suggested that networking and sponsoring/mentoring are crucial for career advancement for males; however, women may not benefit from these to the same extent as men. This could be because according to Kaul (2009) the workplace culture has been created by men and is naturally “masculine” with a competency and ethos typically favoring men. Connell (2005) articulated that men and boys act as the gatekeepers of gender equity and equality. Sherman (2000) mentioned the term gatekeepers in reference to educating them in the process of selection interviewing; establishing women’s networks, and creating organized mentorship for women who aspire to leadership.

Research by Bible & Hill (2007) and Boselovich (2006) found that gender stereotypes in organizational cultures prevailed, and noted differences between men and women persevered. The view that “women take care and men take charge” and that women were not as good at problem solving as their male colleagues were some of the more recognizable perceptions. Hymowitz (2005) reported that men felt that they were superior to women in problem solving, inspiring, delegating, and influencing superiors.

Another important and contributing factor for impeding the advancement of women in their career is the responsibility of dependent care. Metz & Moss (2008) survey findings indicated that dependent care did not negatively impact the career advancement of males or females. These results, which may not be supported, could imply that perceptions of women as the primary caregiver might be contaminated by the stereotype that they have less time to dedicate to their careers than men because of children or dependents. Smith (1976) suggested that society has prepared women to make a commitment to family and not a professional career

and that women have allowed themselves to perpetuate the stereotype that the culture has placed upon them.

Finally, the proverbial term glass ceiling has been used in reference to women's advancement into upper-level positions because of subtle forms of discrimination based on gender, age, race, ethnicity, or sexual preference. In reviewing the literature the expression glass ceiling was used frequently to describe the barrier to career advancement for females. According to Moreau, Osgood, & Halsall (2007) this can materialize in the strong masculine ethos or chauvinistic work environment. Men demonstrating ambition and initiative are likely to be seen as leaders. Women, on the other hand, are at risk of being perceived as aggressive for similar behaviors. Certain masculine traits and attitudes are valued, while others are not. This phenomenon is evident in business, military, and educational settings worldwide. This will become evident in the following pages.

Women in Business Management

Despite the success of numerous women in all facets of life, negative attitudes, stereotypes of women, and an unawareness of changing demographics prevail. These attitudes and stereotypes interfere with women committing to business degrees in college and to advancement in business (Ball, 2012).

While the percentage of women attending and acquiring degrees has increased tremendously over the years and an increasing number of females are entering fields considered non-traditional, overall there has been minimal increase in women majoring in the business field. According to the research of Ball (2012) women have become a larger percent of the college enrollment and yet they are 40% less likely to choose business as a major, resulting in the shrinking size of business programs available at the college level.

Compared to men, women are more likely to select majors focused on helping others, i.e. social work, nursing, and psychology. Therefore, Ball (2012) suggests offering more aggressive courses or programs focused on not-for-profit, or offer joint programs with majors more popular with women, or market business minors to students in fast-growing majors. Whatever the decision, the reverse gender gap trend may continue, and should prompt educators to make the necessary adjustments to business programs at the college level to appeal to the changing mix of college students and attract females to the field.

In the actual career field, Demaiter & Adams (2009) note that the gendered nature of many organizations limit a woman's opportunity for advancement. Although women have made inroads and broken through the glass ceiling into male-dominated jobs, studies suggest that women can be marginalized within masculine workplace cultures or locked into lower paying, lower echelon, and female dominated jobs with limited opportunities for advancement. According to Besen & Kimmel (2006) the disproportional representation of women in managerial jobs was due to the glass ceiling and sticky floor, keeping women in lower paying jobs.

Sipe, Johnson & Fisher (2009) contend that gender inequity and discrimination extend beyond wages. Women comprise 66% of the U.S. workforce, although only 21% are employed in middle management positions. The percentage decreases when looking at senior management. At this level a mere 15% of women are represented at the senior management level.

Metz and Moss (2008) in a survey of 537 women and 506 men, non-management to senior manager levels in a large multinational banking and finance organization, noted that females reported more gender discrimination than their male counterparts. Interestingly, "women who assumed senior management positions, and thus had advanced appreciably during

their careers, were more likely to report discrimination, than women who did not assume senior positions” (p. 62). Additionally, females were less likely to have children than their male counterparts, and women more than men were still more likely to suspend their careers temporarily to assume the responsibilities of the care and nurturing of dependents. The impact of women having dependents consistently impeded women’s advancement more often than men, whether responsibility was shared or not. These results align with social role theory, which conveys the stereotypical perception of women as the primary caregivers. In other words, the assumption is that women have less time to dedicate to their careers than men, even if their family commitments and job demands are similar to males.

Although the literature regarding females responsibility towards dependent and family care is mixed, according to Metz and Moss (2008) mothers are more likely than fathers to assume the primary responsibility for the care and nurturing of dependents, even at the executive level. Because mothers assume this responsibility, they are more likely than fathers to take a career break to support a family member that can stymie promotions and advancements in business organizations. A recent cross-sectional survey (Metz and Moss, 2008) found that women more than men, at all levels of the business sector, demonstrated diminished managerial ambitions. This is possibly due to the additional responsibilities of balancing family and work that characterizes the role of females in society.

From their findings Sipe, Johnson & Fisher (2009) summarized five major factors that affect women’s ability to excel in their careers and get past the glass ceiling: (a) stereotyping and perceptions, (b) mentoring and networking availability, (c) discrimination in the workplace, (d) family issues, and (e) funding availability.

Although the equity gap appears to be closing between men and women in business management careers, it continues to persist and has a firm hold in all occupations, impacting careers, college programs, and majors.

Women in the Armed Forces

Hegemonic masculinity is a concept that has been developed by masculine scholars to explain the dominant ideal of masculinity that exists within a particular culture at a particular point in time (Cohen, 2008). Sex segregation reinforces and contributes to particular aspects of hegemonic masculinity. There are three characteristics of hegemonic masculinity: (a) men are not feminine, (b) men are heterosexual, and (c) men are physically aggressive. There are institutions and structures that powerfully contribute to this dominant form of masculinity within the United States. Arenas such as family, work, media, social networks, and schools are contributors in a male-dominated society. The military, however, is one of the institutions that has forced this cultural ideal upon people at all levels.

In hearings before Congress about whether to expand women's roles in the military, the traditional roles of males and females were clearly articulated. Valerie Vojdik (2005) in *Beyond Stereotyping in Equal Protection Doctrine: Reframing the Exclusion of Women in Combat* noted, "The underlying belief that the warrior was valuable was precisely because women cannot do it." A female Air Force pilot testified that a male test pilot said to her, "I can handle anything, but I can't handle being worse than you." And a Special Operations sergeant testified that, "The warrior mentality will crumble if women are placed in combat positions.... there needs to be that belief that I can do this because nobody else can." In addition, military policy states its rationale that women are technically prohibited from serving in combat:

The possibility of inappropriate interactions ranging from distraction to romance to rape between men and women in friendly and enemy forces; risk taking by men on behalf of women soldiers; sexual harassment; the inherent 'weaker' physical nature of women; and religious objections (Rubin, Weiss & Coll, 2013).

Although there is an increase of eligible positions for women, as a whole, women are clearly underrepresented in the military due to the hypermasculine culture, which means women must overcome the challenges associated with gender discrimination (Rubin, Weiss & Coll, 2013). Although there are stories of women defying military career roadblocks, society's stereotypical image of women as weak, passive, and sexual creates ongoing hurdles. Women often have to struggle with compromising and negative stereotypes that males would not encounter in a military career. These stereotypes can create an unfriendly work environment and can impact job performance and career paths. Women in the military lack role models and mentors and can find themselves feeling isolated, therefore, leaving their career earlier than planned.

According to research by Nosco (2009) women in the military are not a new phenomenon and date back to the revolutionary war. Women's roles have evolved and improved, beginning as tag-along dishwashers and cooks in 1775 to being attached to the Army as a WAAC (Women's Army Auxiliary Corps) in 1942, to present day enlisted personnel. Although viewed as military in WWII, women in WAAC were not officially military, and therefore, had no medical services if wounded or ill, nor did the Geneva Convention protect them if captured. Although this changed in 1943, 25% of the women left the military because of their disillusioned belief in military service or other family reasons. The same reasons for leaving the military persist today.

The Equal Right Movement was the impetus for change for women in general, the response of the military, however, was to create codes and policies thereby producing a system of limitations and restrictions for women interested in pursuing a military career. These regulations determined which positions a woman could fill related to combat and leadership (Nosco, 2009).

Due to the limited number of females in the military, the organization is considered “skewed.” This term is applicable when the ratio of men to women is 85 to 15 or less. In skewed organizations there is a dominant group that controls the group and its culture. The minority groups are called “tokens” and are treated as if they are stereotypical representation of their group (Nosco, 2009). This perspective can be damaging because the token is viewed as the pet or mascot, and taken along or accepted only to optimize the prowess of the dominant group. Because the military is skewed towards the masculine, extreme masculine behaviors and values are considered the norm. Women in the military were found to adapt to the masculine culture, with almost 60% of the female officers scoring masculine in a sex role inventory, 25% androgynous, and less than 10% feminine. When women exhibit so-called male characteristics, it can backfire. This is referred to as a double-bind (Demaniter & Adams, 2009) and occurs when women demonstrate toughness and aggressiveness to avoid being criticized or ostracized by the dominant group. If a woman exhibited masculine leadership traits that were seen as positive for a male, the woman’s leadership behavior was perceived as deviant. Incongruent perceived gender roles in leadership leads to less positive attitudes about female leaders when compared to their male colleagues (Nosco, 2009).

Gender-role orientation matters in terms of who emerges as leaders, noting that agentic traits such as masculinity and dominance were most characteristic of those who emerged as

leaders (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). The end result can be that the woman leader is negatively stereotyped, labeled, and constrained or to reiterate an infamous cliché, “they are damned if they do and damned if they don’t.”

Although these barriers and obstructions can again be viewed as the glass ceiling, Eagly and Carli (2007) would depict the present dilemma faced by women in the military and workforce in general as a labyrinth or maze consisting of many barriers that must be negotiated. Besides a changing society which values more androgynous traits, other factors that can facilitate equalizing of power and privilege would be eradicating the masculine stereotypical image of a leader and eliminating the ethnocentrism that creates dominant in-group and token out-group biases (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). This could prove to be a challenging feat in an environment that truly adulates and idolizes the male warrior culture.

While collecting the current literature on women in the military Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, lifted the ban against women serving in ground combat units on January 23, 2013, and ordered all branches of the military to accept women into combat roles. It remains to be seen if this mandate will be fully implemented by January 2016 or if special exemptions will be submitted declaring certain units excused, thus remaining closed to women.

Women in Higher Education

The persistence of discrimination in academia has been studied as well. Schmitt, Branscombe, Kobrynowicz, & Owen (2002) found in a sample of undergraduate students that females experienced discrimination more than male students, reported less in-group advantage and greater out-group disadvantage, and were more likely to change their major in a male-dominated academic field due to gender-based obstacles in their field.

In their study of 1,373 undergraduate students, with 39% female and 59% male, Sipe, Johnson & Fisher (2009) found that female students, more than their male counterparts,

anticipated discrimination in the workplace related to gender and advancement and gender and pay. Women more than men also reported that parental leave would likely affect their career. What is noteworthy is that although most of the females in the study anticipated discrimination in the workplace related to advancement, pay, and parental leave, they were unlikely to anticipate the discrimination would affect them personally. This finding supported earlier research from Schmitt Branscombe, Kobrynowicz, & Owen (2002) that members of a disadvantaged group are reluctant to perceive discrimination against themselves. One possible conclusion is that female college students believe that a system of knowledge, skills, and abilities are infallible and warrant positive results, outweighing the negative consequences of gender stereotypes.

Women are presently 60% of today's college students (Cook, 2009), 51% of the doctoral degrees are awarded to women (Gresham, 2005), yet they are a mere 40% of the faculty and 21% of college and university presidents (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011). Despite almost equal proportion of females to males receiving doctoral degrees in the United States, women remain unrepresented in senior positions, such as faculty and administrative at higher institutions (Gresham, 2005).

Cook (2009) referred to a statement made by Dr. Lynne Gangone, Dean of the Women's College of the University of Denver, "Advancing the world, one woman at a time," when she writes about underrepresented females in leadership positions at the university level. In Cook's (2009) research she addressed the limited number of females and the ability of women to exercise leadership in higher education and lead in the places they live from day to day, knowing that not all women aspire to be college or university presidents. Cook encourages women to reflect upon all the hard work they are already doing taking evening and weekend classes while

juggling jobs and families. She explains that women's lives are already complicated and though they may say, "I can't," they are already doing it.

Cook (2009) explored the workplace and concluded that it is not fit for people with multiple responsibilities. In the world of academia, women still remain clustered at levels of middle managers with very few progressing to the senior ranks of the administration (Gresham, 2005). It still operates on an obsolete model from the 19th and early 20th century, often leading to women serving in roles with lesser responsibilities and lower down on the career ladder. Gresham (2005) referred to this as a system that is reluctant to reconsider the required skill set for a successful institutional leader for in the 21st century. The practice is currently reliant on traditions that have dated beliefs of male superiority and the rightness of the majority culture.

Although women have made great strides in educational attainment since the nineteenth century, they still remain underrepresented among senior faculty and senior administrators in higher education. In fact, even in hiring practices, the more prestigious the university, the less women faculty members employed. Community colleges in 2001 employed 48% female faculty, four-year colleges employed 38% female faculty, and research universities employed 28% female faculty (Wilson, 2003). It was also noted that when women were associated with a discipline, it was deemed less prestigious and was less valued by men and women. Often women were in jobs that were considered traditional for women such as teaching and library science, while men were in jobs traditionally male, such as science and business. These discrepancies in positions accounted for salary disparities evident when men and women were linked in traditional jobs (Cohen & Huffman, 2003).

Hertneky (2010) identified three components that women college presidents used to define their leadership. The first was balance as it applies to personal and professional life and

time commitments. This was also in relation to their colleagues and when to step in or let a colleague try something on their own. The second characteristic noted was leadership self-identity as demonstrated through relationships, composing a life, learning, and authenticity. Many view themselves as collaborators, facilitators, change agents, role models, and teachers. The third characteristic that emerged was complexity. The women interviewed found that they had the strength of character and conviction, while practicing a style of inclusion and soliciting the input of others. They juggle the demands of their time as wife, mother, partner, daughter, friend, teacher, colleague, scholar, and president, all the while maintaining their personal identity and fulfilling the challenge of an institutional role.

Susan Madsen described in her book *On Becoming a Woman Leader* (2008) the experiences of ten women who are college and university presidents. She describes these women as having a deep self-knowledge and being intentional in their ongoing learning. There were five themes that emerged from Madsen's (2008) research: (a) persistence in learning new skills for the job, (b) open to new experiences for learning, stretching or failure, (c) learning from hardships and failure as they are encountered, (d) reflection on what they saw in themselves and others, and (e) networking and forming intentional connections for the benefit of all parties.

Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) found that successful female administrators in higher education benefitted from having a mentor, whether formally or informally, to provide guidelines, assistance, and support in becoming an educational leader. They recommend that leaders in institutions of higher education that prepare women for careers in administration investigate the possibility of providing mentoring opportunities for graduate students in education.

Unfortunately, discrimination is evident in many arenas of higher education involving student and faculty members, and is often demonstrated in very subtle ways. From their research, Pemberton, Ray, Said, Easterly & Belcher (2010) concluded that there is a growing body of evidence confirming the existence and persistence of harassment and discrimination in higher education. The form and frequency varied from oral remarks to actual threats and often occurred in the classroom or on the campus. An interesting fact was that survey results indicated that faculty experienced sexual discrimination at a higher rate than staff or students.

As the system currently stands, women are demanding the right to fuller participation in an organization not necessarily designed with women in mind. The higher education system as a whole was designed as an institution geared to meeting the needs of men, which requires extreme commitment, focus, and priority to a career (Gresham, 2005). Even the procedure of tenure implies quantity rather than quality, which is in opposition to women who choose to pursue a balance between career academia and family (Gresham, 2005).

We are continuing further into the 21st century, where roles of females and males are gradually shifting. It is necessary as we proceed to develop new solutions to the hurdles that continue to exist in the domains of higher education and that will better support the current needs of a changing culture.

Women Around the World

During the exploration into the subject of the underrepresentation of women in various areas, it was repeatedly observed that much of the current literature on the subject of women in education took place in other countries. It became apparent that this discrepancy is a global issue and not only an observable fact in the United States. There are established social norms for males and females globally. Western formulations regarding norms for women are not the

realities of most of the female population globally (Gresham, 2005). The culture, language, and sociopolitical hierarchies impact the roles and identities that define females worldwide (Hakim, 2007).

Yang & Li (2009) illustrated the increasing concern with workplace discrimination for all women in China regardless of position or education. With the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, discrimination against women was legally and theoretically eliminated. Although numerous laws have been passed to deter gender discrimination, similar to the United States, new forms of gender discrimination within the workplace have emerged in more subtle ways. This results in a system that exhibits direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, and protective discrimination. Large numbers of women in many occupations are subject to discrimination as evidenced by hiring practices, limited opportunities for promotion, limited freedom in career choice, lack of social insurance benefits, unemployment, early compulsory retirement age, and other inventive impediments. Many of the obstacles faced by women are conducted under the guise of protecting women and reflect the pervasive gendered attitudes about men and women's roles in the Chinese culture.

Yang & Li (2009) pointed out that cultural norms about gender roles can affect people's ability to identify discrimination. Cultural norms about a woman's role are deeply entrenched in society and are difficult to eradicate in China. A yearlong survey to gather views of Chinese citizens on various topics relating to gender discrimination produced interesting results. The vast majority of the general public, 93.3%, seemed to be informed of the constitutional principle of gender equality. However, only 30% of the respondents believed that gender equality provisions in the Constitution or other laws were taken seriously or had any real impact. Gender

discrimination was rarely brought to court, most of the respondents did not feel discrimination was being eliminated, and most were not optimistic about progress in this area.

Another interesting finding from the research of Yang & Li (2009) was that most survey respondents compared women's status now to women prior to 1949 rather than comparing women to men in contemporary China. Respondents, male and females, identified men and women as having different priorities and expectations in choosing a job or a career. Men should focus on opportunity and bright future, while women should seek stability.

China has a paternalistic approach to protecting women based on them being biologically different from men, which influences their laws and regulations. Unfortunately, these laws presume that women are intellectually inferior and restrict the work that women are allowed to perform. Changing the present system and offering actual equality for women in China would require the involvement of men and women so that males and female could exercise their full potential (Yang & Li, 2009).

In education, the contrast between the number of female teachers and women participating in China's leadership is disproportionate. The proportion of women involved in school leadership decreases from preschool to elementary school, and to secondary school. Differences in unfair policies in retirement age for males and females hamper women's career longevity and interfere with possible promotions thereby shortening a women's participation in educational leadership. As a result women over 45 are usually not promoted and most end up in midlevel positions, losing the opportunity for senior positions (Qiang, Han & Niu, 2009).

Similar concerns have been identified in Turkey, specifically related to education. Celikten (2010) states that although women represent the majority of teachers in Turkey, there is a shortage of female educational administrators in elementary and secondary public education.

The assumption might be that there would be more female administrators in a field that is over 60% female, however they are significantly underrepresented.

Turkish women often serve in the teaching capacity longer than males and encounter more obstacles in becoming a school administrator (Celikten, 2010). Kowalski (1995) notes that when women do begin to advance in the ranks of administration, they are usually responsible for the curriculum issues. This is not uncommon and has been recognized in other countries, including the United States (Iowa Department of Education, 2011).

Again, the evidence points to stereotypical characteristics and roles of male and female leadership with the masculine traits being valued in Turkish schools (Celikten, 2010). Women were perceived to be suited for human service jobs such as nursing, social work, teaching and domestic work.

Celikten (2010) states that, “According to the familial ideology in Turkey, the proper place for a woman is in the home, attending to housework and the children, while her husband is the breadwinner” (p.536). Although women constitute 52% of the population of Turkey in 2006, they only held about 2% of the administrative positions nationwide. Women were 61% of the elementary teaching population and held only 4% of the elementary principal positions. Women were also 44% of the secondary school teachers but held about 1% of the secondary administrator positions.

While there has been steady progress of women moving into administrative positions, women still face barriers and discrimination while attempting to reach upper levels of their careers. The glaring statistics articulated for China and Turkey, are replicated in other countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia, which are considered more progressive relative to employment (McTavish & Miller, 2009).

McTavish & Miller (2009) recognize the high numbers of women employed in post-secondary education in the United Kingdom but very few actually progress into leadership positions. They attempt to explain the gender imbalance by noting that there is a pervasive culture of masculinity.

Women in the United Kingdom are underrepresented at the governance and leadership positions and are concentrated in jobs and subject areas traditionally associated with stereotypical female interests and aptitudes, such as nursing and care (McTavish & Miller, 2009). While the statistics are not as morose as seen in the literature on China or Turkey, they are painting a similar picture of the inadequate representation of other modernized and progressive countries, like the United States. The global causes, barriers, and masculine organizational values continue to perpetuate gender segregation in upper management and administration.

Northcraft & Gutek (1993) predicted that discrimination against women in the workplace would persist. Metz & Moss (2008) indicate that recent research validates this prediction and reveals that women at all levels of management report that gender discrimination is a barrier to their workplace advancement in Australia. In addition, Metz & Moss (2008) observe that the underrepresentation of women in management doesn't seem to reflect their family commitments, limited education, or limited career aspirations.

The articles referenced above were just a few of the numerous studies that correlated with women leadership from a global perspective. The focus on women as secondary principals in the United States has far less research and information.

Female School Administration

In spite of the laws passed and gender gaps closing, the data continue to indicate a persistent problem in the workforce in general. Even in the field of PK- 12 education that is

predominately female, evidence of a glass ceiling and an underrepresentation of women at the school management level remains (Moreau, Osgood & Halsall, 2007).

According to the 2011-2012 Condition of Education Report published by the Iowa Department of Education, the teaching profession is comprised of 75% female and yet there are only 38% females in leadership positions, such as K-12 principals or central office. The percent of females in leadership positions at the secondary level, grades 6-12, is 23.7%, yet even more concerning is the percent of female superintendents at 12.7% in 2011-2012. Based on the large number of females represented in the teaching occupation, it would seem logical that female leaders in education would be reflective of the profession as a whole. Yet while the majority of teachers are females, they have not attained a proportional share of management and leadership roles in education.

Women Superintendents in Public Education

Martinek (1996) found in her study that male and female superintendents have similarities in identifying their major job responsibilities as budget/finance and community relations as important in their position. Female superintendents, however, indicated that performing a broader array of leadership roles that were reflective of transformational leadership were a priority. Males reported managerial roles as a priority more often than females. It becomes apparent that male and female leadership in the superintendent position looks different, with females focused on transformational activities and males focused on traditional management activities.

The necessary qualifications and expectations for leadership in the 21st century is changing the role of administrative leadership at all levels to be focused on educational leadership rather than management (Montz, 2004) causing the pool of qualified candidates to

shrink. Unfortunately, the greatest untapped resource for administrative positions in education is women (Brunner, 1999). The superintendency is one of the slowest administrative positions to integrate women.

While there is an increase in women pursuing all levels of higher education, bachelors, masters, and doctoral programs focused on education (Montz, 2004), the job placement of women in educational administration does not parallel this increase (Brunner, 1999). The increased number of graduates has created a pool of highly qualified women with valuable educational experience, advanced degrees and coursework, motivation, and mobility that would allow them to be candidates in superintendent searches.

According to the Annual Condition of Education (2011) the data indicates that there was a slight increase of 1.3% of female superintendents from 2010; however, females still only occupy 14% of the superintendent positions within the state of Iowa. Women educators continue to be significantly underrepresented in the superintendency.

Candidates are generally brought forward for consideration by a private search consultant or consultants working with the state's school board association. Although the list of candidates presented to school board members typically include qualified women, school boards tend to continue to hire men over women at a rate of almost ten to one (Brunner, 1999). It has been speculated that local school boards and search companies are frequently the gatekeepers in the search process for superintendents. It raises the question of gender rather than attributes and skills precipitating the selection of superintendents as the roadblock to accessing superintendent position and continues to be extremely difficult for women across the nation (Brunner, 1999).

In addition to school boards and search committees, research indicates that there continues to be several additional barriers women who aspire to the position of superintendent

encounter that may contribute to the underrepresentation of females in that position: (a) women are less willing to relocate due to the impact the move may have on their spouse and children, (b) less confidence for working in a male dominated field, (c) limited expertise beyond curriculum and instruction, (d) perceptions about women managing difficult or ineffective staff, and (e) lack of female role models and mentors to support women aspiring to the superintendency (Montz, 2004).

The nature of the superintendency is changing as a direct result of federal and state reform efforts focused on increased student achievement. Superintendents are now viewed as the change agent and not just managers, who are expected to effectively lead reform efforts, improve student achievement, and be visionaries of the 21st Century. They are expected to have effective problem solving and interpersonal skills that will allow them to work successfully with staff, students, parents, and the community (Dabney-Lieras, 2008).

It is hopeful that the changing role and job description of the superintendency will open doors for women, who typically possess what are considered 21st Century skills. There are five approaches that characterized women in educational leadership: (a) leadership for learning, (b) leadership for social justice, (c) relational leadership, (d) spiritual leadership, and (e) balanced leadership (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). The question is will the changing roles, expectations, and requirements for superintendent positions apply to the role of female secondary principals?

Women as Secondary Principals in Public Education

In an effort to discover additional literature to better understand the current underrepresentation of women in secondary education, it became evident that there is limited up-to-date research regarding the continued disparity. Most of the research in the United States that specifically focuses on the disproportionate ratio of male and females in education occurred in

the 1970s and 1980s when the women's movement was a spirited and active force. What was of interest while reviewing earlier and present research is that many of the causalities, conclusions and recommendations were similar in spite of the 30-year span.

According to Moreau, Osgood & Halsall (2007) there are three main gender imbalances within the teaching workforce: (a) gender imbalance across educational phases – women are concentrated in the primary sectors, (b) across subjects taught – there is a lower proportion of women in math and sciences when compared to other subjects, and (c) across positions – women are underrepresented in advanced positions – across all educational phases.

The teaching profession is often viewed as a more female friendly work environment when compared to other professions: as Informational Technology, business, and industry, which are frequently described as male-dominated and less woman friendly (Moreau, Osgood & Halsall, 2007). According to Calabrese & Ellsworth (1989),

The intent of the affirmative action is denied if public school organizations and universities profess to be actively seeking women and minority employees, but their departments and administration employ few. Encouragement to women must go beyond lip service; such support must result in an actual increase in the numbers of qualified applicants. School districts must not be satisfied with the hiring of a female assistant principal as a token compliance with affirmative action regulations. Such actions do more to discourage women from considering school administration as a meaningful career. (p. 64)

Overt discriminatory actions can be addressed through legal means. The focus then becomes the subtle actions of those in power. These camouflaged actions are difficult to document and to confront.

Gender discrimination can and often is evident in gender equitable compensation.

Young, Reimer & Young (2010) found evidence conflicting with previous research suggesting that discrimination in pay for building level principals on the basis of sex were in compliance with federal legislation and that females are equally valued relative to their male counterparts. They acknowledge that their findings are different from previous research and attribute this to surveying only middle school principals in California and the advancement in methodology and collection of data. This topic would warrant further research, and surveying a broader sampling to determine if in fact there is gender discrimination in secondary administration across the United States and specifically Iowa.

Public school administration is a male-dominated career, in which females are underrepresented at all levels. Female leadership has steadily increased over the years but continues to be underrepresented in an occupation that is predominately women. The data indicate that female leadership decreases with the level of hierarchy. For example, females constitute a higher percentage of elementary principals while the numbers decrease in middle and high school principalships (Calabrese & Ellsworth, 1989). There are few rational explanations for this phenomenon. School districts claim to adhere to affirmative action, equal opportunity and non-discriminatory regulations, however access to administrative positions at the secondary level does not reflect the legal codes.

Eckman (2003) indicates that unless there is a concerted effort to encourage women to pursue careers in educational administration secondary principalships will not improve. While barriers for women desiring a career in secondary principalship deserve attention and should be addressed, current building administrators, school board members, and university professors should encourage and promote the concerted effort.

The number of females represented in superintendent and secondary principalship continues to be surprising low. Although the ongoing setbacks, barriers, and suppositions have for women in education been articulated in numerous research articles over the last 30 years, circumstances have changed minimally. The literature has identified the recurring themes that explain, illustrate, and justify the limited number of female educational leaders. However, little has been written to address how women in these positions have been successful and what has contributed to their success.

While a concentrated effort should be made to increase the diversity of faculty in all academic institutions and this applies to the position of secondary principal, it is also important to take note of those who are in these positions, how they lead, what has sustained their leadership, and what skill sets and strategies have been implemented.

There is a continued need for research that focuses exclusively on the secondary principal from a woman's perspective. Too often researchers have not distinguished between women in central office and women in the positions of elementary, middle, or high school principalships and as a result examined women administrators as a group (Eckman, 2003). Data reported in this manner communicates a false impression of current trends in regard to women in educational leadership. The National Center for Education Statistics (1994) reported principals were often identified as key figure in determining the quality of a school and that they have traditionally come from the teaching ranks, yet questioned why there are so few women principals given their proportion in the teaching profession.

This study will add to the existing body of research about the lived experiences, administrative behavior, and the leadership preferences and characteristics of female secondary principals. Few studies have specifically addressed the experiences and characteristics of

successful women secondary principals. A greater body of research needs to be conducted on secondary female principals in order to learn how women have managed to successfully sustain the principalship and overcome existing gender barriers.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This study attempted to uncover what accounts for the disproportionate representation of women in secondary administration and ultimately what are the identified critical skills and characteristics that women have used to overcome identified barriers to the position and experience success in the secondary principal role. Additional inspiration for this study occurred upon the realization that there is limited information or research on the topic of the female secondary principal.

The goal of this research project was not to focus on gender discrimination or inequity, as this topic can create defensiveness and close-mindedness. This study was designed to allow the reader to gain additional knowledge or information regarding the current trend or research.

The purpose of Chapter 3 is to describe the methods and procedures used to collect, analyze, and present the data received from the identified female participants in secondary administration in one Midwestern state. The methodology is intended to be highly detail-oriented and technical, explaining exactly how the research will be accomplished operationalized, and measureable (Butin, 2010).

The methodology employed for this study was a qualitative method using a multiple case study approach. Qualitative research, with underpinnings in American sociology and anthropology, has a specific way of structuring the research process and uses an unambiguous and precise vocabulary. It is similar to the widely used quantitative method research in that there is an emphasis on disciplined data collection. (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). Geertz (1973) points out that qualitative procedures such as individual interviews enable the researcher to get in tune with the respondent and discover how that person sees reality.

Qualitative research has five distinctive features: (a) It is naturalistic because the source of data collection takes place in actual settings and the researcher is the key instrument. The belief is that the data collected can best be understood when observed in the setting where it occurs (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). (b) It is descriptive in nature. The data collected takes the form of words and pictures rather than numbers. The written results may contain some or all of the following: quotations, interview transcripts, fieldnotes, photographs, videotapes, personal documents, memos, and other official records. The researcher observes and notes everything. Everything is viewed as a clue to be described to better understand what is being studied (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). (c) The process of gathering data rather than just the outcome or product is the focus. The researcher attempts to understand meaning, notions, terms, labels, attitudes, daily interactions, expectations, procedures, activities and events (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). (d) It is inductive. The researcher arrives at a conclusion based on observation rather than approaching the study with a hypothesis with the intent to prove or disprove. The abstractions emerge and the researcher develops some kind of theory about what is being studied (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). (e) The fundamental concern of qualitative research is meaning. Qualitative researchers are interested in how different people make sense of their lives and the perspectives of the participants regarding their experiences and how the participants interpret their experiences (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007).

Creswell (2007) points out that qualitative research takes time, involves an ambitious plan for data analysis, results in lengthy reports, and often does not follow firm guidelines that can assist the researcher. Qualitative research “often begins with an assumption, a worldview, the use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 37).

Case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). Bogdan & Biklen (2007) articulate that in using a case study approach, the researcher's primary technique is participant observation that can include one or all of the following: formal and informal interviews, a particular place, a specific group of people, or an activity. According to Creswell (2007) a multiple case study or collective case study is when one issue or concern is selected, and the inquirer or researcher then selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue. Yin (2010) suggests that the multiple case study design uses the logic of replication, in which the researcher replicates the procedures for each case.

A qualitative, multiple case study approach using replication logic was used to examine the lived experiences of women secondary principals in one Midwestern state. The goal of this research study was to explore the lived experiences of female secondary principals, their perceptions of attributes that contributed to their success, barriers encountered, and areas to navigate due to the underrepresentation of females in this specific position. It was the hope of this researcher to better understand the career experiences of this selected topic and group to advocate for and empower future female educators to consider the secondary principalship as a career option.

Participants

For the purpose of this study the decision was made to conduct research as close to the capital city as possible, which is located near to the center of the state. The participants for this study were based on feasibility and access (Yin, 2010) and the researcher's ability to travel to the location was also a consideration. An important part of a qualitative, multiple case study is finding the people or places to study and having access to build the rapport that is crucial to

gathering the desired data (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) also points out the sampling strategy of critical cases, which are those that can provide significant data about an identified topic and are easily accessible by the researcher. Mertens (2010) reminds the researcher that in having a small sample size it should be of sufficient size to make the disaggregation of data meaningful.

Schumacher and McMillan (1993) suggest that individuals are purposefully selected because they are knowledgeable and informed about the phenomenon of interest. They contend, “the power and logic of purposeful sampling is that a few cases studied in depth yield many insights about the topic” (p. 378). The researcher does this to increase the utility of information-rich cases. Knowing the information needed the researcher searches for key informants, groups, places or events to study to gather the information-rich cases to study.

The target population for this study was current or recently retired secondary female principals. Using an educational directory published by the Iowa Department of Education, the names and districts employing female secondary principals were identified. This proved to be a challenging endeavor as there were very few female principals listed for the state and in central Iowa. The researcher contacted the Department of Education and the School Administrators of Iowa (SAI), organizations within the state that support all school administrators, requesting recommendations of potential interview candidates. A combined list of potential interview candidates was received from the School Administrators of Iowa organization.

The researcher discussed the dilemma of having a limited list of potential participants with a colleague from another organization called the Area Education Agency. This organization is statewide and supports all public and private schools within the state of Iowa. This female colleague began iChatting with another female co-worker in another part of the state asking

whether she worked with any female secondary principals in her part of the state. With the assistance of this person, additional names were added to the list of potential interview candidates. The researcher also discussed the predicament of acquiring an adequate number of participants with her superintendent, who identified two additional female secondary principals for possible interviews.

In the world of qualitative research this technique is called a “snowball sampling.” According to Vogt and Johnson (2011) this is a technique used for finding research subjects. This chain sampling begins by one subject giving the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of another, and so on. This technique is especially useful when the researcher is attempting to find people with similar and/or unusual experiences. This chain-referral sampling is also referred to as “network sampling” or in quantitative research can be referred to “respondent-driven sampling.”

Respondent-driven sampling is an advanced version of snowball sampling that can be used when attempting to find members of a hard-to-access population through their social networks. Similar to snowball sampling, RDS begins with a set of respondents who serve as the “seeds.” The seeds recruit their friends, acquaintances, or relatives who might qualify for inclusion in the study. This forms the first “wave.” The first-wave respondents then recruit the second wave, and so on. RDS is somewhat different from snowball sampling in that it applies a mathematical weighting in an attempt to eliminate convenience sampling and make the process reflective of a simple random sampling (Vogt & Johnson, 2011).

Although the snowball sampling assisted in attaining research subjects, it is important to note that the sampling was purposeful (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), that is to say, the particular subjects were included because they were believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing

theory. Purposeful sampling ensures that the characteristics of the subjects in the study appear in the same proportion that they appear in the total population. This is opposite of a random sampling, in which participants are chosen entirely by chance (Vogt & Johnson, 2011).

Schumacher & McMillan (1993) describe purposeful sampling as selecting information-rich cases for study samples. This method is effective because the researcher selects individuals who are knowledgeable and informed about the subject of interest. Purposeful samplings yield countless insights about the topic, as there is nothing random about the sampling.

Additional contact information, such as mailing and email addresses of the participants were obtained from the Public School Directory (2012), which is updated and published annually and from colleagues. This information was then cross-referenced with local district website data. The intended population identified for study was selected based affirmative responses from initial contacts and their willingness to participate in the study.

I purposefully fashioned three lists beginning with my A list, then B, and then C. My intent was to begin contacting women on my A list. These were women I was keenly aware of their success, character, and reputations in education. My B list had women I was somewhat aware of their longevity and success in education but not to the same degree as my A list. My C list was comprised of women whom I did not know other than they were still principals in the state. All of the women from this researcher's A list agreed to participate and represented a variety of district demographics, age, and longevity in the principalship. Interviews are structured conversations and organized by main questions, follow-up questions, and probes (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The research study was guided by a set of established open-ended questions, which allowed each respondent to provide rich descriptive (Creswell, 2007) data of

her educational experiences, her perceptions of female characteristics that contributed or impeded her success, and areas to navigate in the position of a female secondary principal.

A brief description of each participant was included. This assisted in readability and representation (Atkinson, 1992) by providing the necessary background knowledge to fully understand their story. A pseudonym was provided for each participant to maintain their confidentiality and safeguard their identities.

Design

The research design guides the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007) the term design is used in research to refer to the researcher's plan of how they plan to proceed. Considering the overall design involves evaluating, critiquing, and assessing the rigor conducted in the study (Merriam, 2009).

This researcher used a qualitative method, multiple case study design to collect thick, rich descriptive (Merriam, 2009) data from selected female secondary principals to explore experiences, clarify specific skills and characteristics, articulate common barriers to better understand why women are under-represented in the secondary principal role. A thick description is providing everything a reader needs to know in order to understand the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This produces a detailed account of the field experiences while achieving an external validity. A thick, rich description is contrasted with a thin description, which communicates a superficial and shallow explanation of the experience, leaving the reader with unanswered questions and unconvincing research conclusions (Creswell, 2007).

The theory through which the researcher proceeded, viewed, and analyzed the study was a variation of Critical Theory. Critical Theory according to Bogdan & Biklen (2007) "is critical of social organization that privileges some at the expense of others" (p. 22). Simply stated, the

definition of Critical Theory is that it is a theory focused on political, cultural, economic, and social relationship within a culture, particularly as they relate to which groups have power and which groups do not. Critical Theory examines the power relationships between and among groups. Bogdan & Biklen (2007) point out that “critical theorists who do qualitative research are very interested in issues of gender, race, and class because they consider these the prime means for differentiating power in this society” (p. 22).

Several variations of Critical Theory are grounded conceptually in the theory but take on other perspectives. One extension of Critical Theory, although there are many, is Feminist Theory. Feminist Theory is an extension of feminism into philosophical and/or academic discussions. The purpose of Feminist Theory is to understand the nature of gender inequality. It examines women’s social roles, their experience, and feminist politics in a wide variety of fields. Generally, Feminist Theory provides a critique of social relations and it can also focus on analyzing gender inequality, the promotion of women’s rights, women’s interests, and women’s issues. Some of the topics explored within Feminist Theory include discrimination, stereotyping, objectification, and oppression. Feminist Theory and practice emerged and traversed qualitative research in the late 1970s and early 1980s and has continued to influence many qualitative research projects (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

It is through this lens of Critical Feminist Theory that this research study explored the topic of women in the workplace, specifically women administrators in secondary education. Why are women under-represented in secondary administration? Are there cloaked barriers that keep women from occupying these positions equitably? Does gender stereotyping or discrimination impact the obvious imbalance in male/female secondary principalships? Is there a glass ceiling in secondary education?

The researcher selected a multiple case study approach as it is designed to show different perspectives on an identified issue (Creswell, 2007). Yin (2010) identifies the case study as being appropriate when “why” questions are being asked about a contemporary phenomenon over which the researcher has little control. The researcher selected this study design because it allowed each participant to share her reality and her experience as a secondary principal. The perceptions of the participants helped the researcher develop the rationale as to why females are under-represented in the secondary principalship, and determine what skills and strategies they employed to overcome barriers along the way and to sustain a successful principalship in secondary education.

Instrumentation

The interview protocol of this study was designed to address five research questions. The research and interview questions evolved due to personal experiences in the field, conversations with female educator colleagues, and an increasing and burgeoning awareness of the disproportionate numbers of males versus females in this specific career.

Rubin and Rubin (2005) provide suggestions for interviewing including the use of main questions, follow-up questions and probes. The main questions are prepared in advance to assure that the major areas of the research are addressed. The follow-up questions provide additional information to weave together expressed themes, concepts or events that the interviewee has introduced. Finally, probes are implemented to keep the conversation on topic, allow for clarification, and acquire the necessary depth, detail, vividness, richness, and nuance of the dialogue (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

There are various types of instruments used to collect data for qualitative research. The most utilized instruments researchers use for collecting data are focus groups and in-depth

interviews (Milena, Dainora & Alin, 2008). The predominate method used to gather data for this study was through in-depth interviews. Five open-ended questions were used for this research study, allowing the participant to address topics relating to her professional and personal demographics, career path, characteristics needed for success, and perception on the underrepresentation of females in this particular position.

The in-depth interviews were included in the research design to add rich descriptions, depth, and understanding to the research. The data included interview transcripts, fieldnotes, recordings, and memos made during and after the interviews.

An in-depth interview is considered an effective qualitative method for getting people to talk about their personal feelings, experiences, and opinions. Participants are usually more relaxed, confident, and encouraged to share their deepest thoughts and feelings about a topic. The results vary depending on the participants and subject being explored (Milena, Dainora & Alin, 2008).

Open-ended questions are designed to elicit insightful responses to the questions posed in a study and encourage people to talk about their experiences, perceptions, and understanding rather than to give a normative response, or textbook-like answer (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The set of questions was designed to allow 4 practicing women secondary principals to share what they believe to be critical skills and strategies for success in the profession. The open-ended interview guide was developed by the researcher to provide a framework and assist in the in-depth interview process. According to Vogt & Johnson (2011) a list of questions and instructions for how to ask the questions is called an interview protocol and is used as a guide with interviewing respondents.

The qualitative research method emerges during inquiry, but it usually follows the pattern of scientific research (Creswell, 2007). Bogdan & Biklen (2007) propose that qualitative research meets the criteria for being a scientific research method as it is rigorous, involves systematic empirical inquiry, and is data-based. The data collected are descriptive, reliable and analytical, and trustworthy.

Creswell (2007) discusses the assumptions, worldview, and the theoretical lens of a qualitative study, adding that the research is collected at the field site where the participants experience the issue or problem being studied. This course of action allowed this study to acquire the needed depth of information and important details from female secondary principals; giving this research added richness, authenticity, and credibility, which are hallmarks of a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The conception of this research inspiration was conceived based on the observations and experiences of the researcher personally. The methodology chosen for this study allowed women secondary principals to communicate their story and the researcher to listen, reflect, and identify reoccurring and emerging themes (Creswell, 2007).

Procedures

Butin (2010) offers guidance in preparing for a research project. Identifying the specific procedures at each stage is critical if the researcher desires the final product to be flawless and contribute to the body of research. The preparation state (Butin, 2010) involves organization, timelines, and structuring a process that suits the researcher. Butin points out “you have to carefully, methodically, and systematically prepare for the process” (p. 20).

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) discuss the challenges of acquiring access to participants. They clarify the importance of responding honestly to legitimate questions about why the

participants are chosen, what would be done with the research, and even reciprocity. Three bits of advice are (a) be persistent in pursuit, (b) be flexible in coming up with a plan or approach, and (c) be creative in gaining access to participants.

There are new forms of qualitative data, which can be grouped into four basic types of information: (a) observations, (b) interviews, (c) documents, and (d) audiovisual (Creswell, 2007). The form of data collection for this study was primarily interviewing.

Following approval by the review board, the plan was to contact individual female principals by email. The following details included in the email were details regarding the research project, who referred them for this study, their willingness to participate in an interview at their building at their convenience, and approximate time commitment.

Depending on the response of the initial email, the next step was to follow up with a phone call outlining the same information from the original email. Disclosure about the details of the study assisted in building rapport and encouraged participant involvement (Creswell, 2007). If the participant was willing to take part in the study, the five main questions were emailed as an attachment, which allowed her time to review and reflect prior to the interview. Bogdan & Biklen (2007) encourage the researcher to use the visit as exploratory to access what is feasible and to be prepared to modify research expectations and design.

Initially, the plan was to conduct one interview with each participant and a possible second meeting if clarification or added details were needed. Following the interview, transcriptions and coding an awareness of limited detail or information was noted and a follow up phone call and/or meeting would have been scheduled. The second meeting or phone call was not necessary.

Although there are no rules that consistently apply to all interview situations, there are some effective protocols that are applicable. Creswell (2009) encourages qualitative researchers to use a protocol for recording observational data, such things as (a) keeping descriptive notes, (b) keeping reflective notes, (c) keeping demographic information, and (d) following a standardized procedure. Although the interview was recorded, taking notes is recommended. It is best practice to take notes, which was the plan of this researcher throughout each interview.

In the responsive interviewing model, the researcher is looking for depth and detail, and vivid and nuanced answers that are rich with thematic material. Depth involves searching for a point of view and going beyond the superficial, while detail means encouraging the interviewee to provide specifics and particulars (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

It is suggested to begin with small talk to develop rapport, find common ground, find similar topics, and begin building a relationship (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This was an important strategy, especially when the researcher did not know the participants. Initially it is important to reassure and review the purpose and confidentiality with the interviewee. The consent form was signed and interview questions were reviewed at this time as well.

To encourage the participants to feel comfortable and communicate significant information related to this study an agreed upon consent form was signed by the researcher and participant. The consent form spelled out the details of the study: (a) promise of confidentiality and use of pseudonyms, (b) the use of interview and observations, (c) her right to withdraw from the study, (d) an assurance that only the researcher would have access to this information on the computer, (e) the assurance of a copy of the transcript, (f) the right to negotiate changes before the final draft is written, and (g) a copy of the final research project. Pseudonyms were used throughout the written transcription to assure each participant's confidentiality. Reassuring

confidentiality encouraged participants to speak more freely (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In qualitative research, the interviews are often the dominant strategy for data collection or they can be employed in conjunction with participant observation, document analysis, and other techniques (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Interviewing required pre-planning and good listening skills.

Additional techniques employed during these interviews were observing and noting specific gestures and cadence of speech, the participant's environmental surroundings, and the participant's overall actions and interactions with the researcher. Techniques employed while listening to the audio recording of the interviews were to listen carefully to pick up subtle innuendos and suppositions that may have been missed during the actual interview.

The decision for the recording device was effortless for this researcher based on previous experience. Making sure the recording equipment is easy to operate, has adequate memory, and capable of making clear recordings is critical to acquiring good information. The placement of the device for clear recordings is another consideration (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The use of adequate recording procedures when conducting one to one interviews is encouraged by Creswell (2007).

The next step following the interviewing of the participants was determining how the interviews would transcribe into a written document to analyze. Transcribing takes extensive time, so for the purposes of efficiency someone transcribed the interviews for this study. Bogdan & Biklen (2007) point out the importance of working closely with the transcriber in order to make certain the work is accurate. The goal was to capture the most accurate rendition of what occurred, which was the recorded interview.

Presently, the plan was to record using the iPad and transfer the recording to the transcriber digitally. There are several available options, such as transferring the recording via Dropbox, Google Doc, or iTunes. This was a discussion that occurred with the transcriber and the decision was based on which application was easiest for her to access. Storage, organization, labeling, and backing up the recorded data are additional considerations that must be thought through (Creswell, 2007).

Although the plan was to have the iPad charged and prepared for the interviews, the technology tool was repeatedly tested to assure that during the individual interviews the recording device would work perfectly. Memory capacity was reviewed and tested for a clear and audible recording. In addition, an iPod was charged and taken to the interview in case the planned recording using the iPad did not work correctly. In this digital age, it is possible for technology to not function properly and having multiple plans is wise and can prevent mishaps. Bogdan & Biklen (2007) state that too many interviews have been lost because of malfunctioning equipment that occurred because it was taken for granted that the equipment would work. Equipment checks may be intrusive, time consuming, and distressing but worth it.

Obtaining richness during an interview occurs when the interviewee is asked to elaborate, give more examples, and convey narrative stories. Richness means that the interview may contain various ideas and different themes that were not anticipated when the study began. Richness is communicated through extended descriptions and long narratives.

This researcher was entirely prepared, completely organized, and skillfully practiced prior to engaging in any interviews. The goal was to accomplish the task of interviewing with minimal difficulty or impediments, finishing with immeasurable amounts of data to engage and push forward in the analysis and findings of the interviews.

Data Analysis

The study was descriptive in nature and used qualitative methodology to answer the five research questions. The data collected takes the form of words and pictures rather than numbers, as quantitative research employs (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

All of this record keeping was considered data. It was reviewed, analyzed, and closely inspected looking for information that can be converted into the written word and convey an emergent story. Nothing was overlooked or taken for granted during an in-depth interview. The researcher observed and analyzed the spoken word as well as the small gestures, jokes, and room environment (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

It should be noted that validity and reliability are the traditionally accepted criteria for quantitative research. These concerns cannot be addressed adequately in qualitative research. Instead the qualitative researcher looked for at least two of the following criteria (Creswell, 2009): (a) prolonged engagement and persistent observation, (b) triangulation, (c) peer review or debriefing, (d) negative case analysis, (e) clarifying researcher bias, (f) member checks, (g) thick description, and (h) external audits.

Reliability and validity are terms that apply to quantitative research. However, a great deal of attention is applied to the reliability and validity in all research methods. Without this rigorous effort, research is considered worthless, loses its utility, and becomes a work of fiction (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, Spiers, 2002). There has been much debate regarding qualitative research and a lack of consensus regarding the standards and the public disclosure of the process (Anfara, Brown, Mangione, 2002).

Guba and Lincoln (1981) substitute reliability and validity with the parallel concept of trustworthiness when looking at qualitative research. There are four aspects of trustworthiness

that demonstrate rigor in a qualitative study: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) conformability.

Creswell notes (2007) that there is not one single way to analyze qualitative data. It is an eclectic process in which the researcher tries to make sense of the gathered information. Due to this, the approaches to data analysis advocated by qualitative researchers will vary.

Following the indepth interviews with four female secondary principals, the qualitative data were analyzed, categorized, and coded. Qualitative research accumulates mountains of data and it is the job of the researcher to make sense of what has been learned (Anfara, Brown, Mangione, 2002). Bogdan & Biklen, (2007) articulate that certain words, phrases, patterns of behavior, the participant's way of thinking, and events repeated all stand out. It is through the recognition of similarities, shared characteristics, and commonalities of the interviews that the coding begins.

The acquired interviews were compared to one another thus triangulating the data, which is accomplished by examining the evidence from different individuals and other data sources collected, such as observation, fieldnotes, and body language, which will build coherent themes. This step is important as it ensures that the research will be correct because the information is from multiple sources, assuring that the study is accurate and credible (Creswell, 2007). The focus of identifying emerging patterns, categorizing similarities and differences, and interpreting the larger meaning of the data are all critical components of qualitative data analysis.

During the analysis process bracketing the data is critical while considering an experience purely and apart from its prior association and context (Vogt & Johnson, 2011). Bracketing is essential in order to construct the meaning of the participants and information in a case study and not pollute the data collected (Creswell, 2007). Researchers bracket by not assuming they know

what things mean to the people they are studying. It is an attempt to grasp what it is that is being studied by bracketing the idea the participants take for granted as true (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Bracketing helps to focus on the subjective aspects of people's behavior, knowing that there are multiple ways of interpreting experiences. It was important for this researcher to implement this strategy in each interview by being cognizant and mindful that each participant was telling her story through her eyes and her point of view.

There are several suggested methods for coding the data collected in a research study. Coding the data is a method of winnowing or sifting the data into meaningful segments and assigning names for the segments. Coding is done by establishing broad categories or themes, displaying and making comparisons with graphs, tables, and charts (Creswell, 2007).

The qualitative data for this study was collected by the researcher to expand the knowledge base and deepen the understanding of female secondary principals' career paths relative to their unique experiences, perceptions about the characteristics and skills that have contributed to their success, and the barriers for female candidates aspiring to the principalship at the secondary level.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The opportunity to actually conduct qualitative research has been gratifying. It has not only provided me the possibility to explore firsthand the world of female secondary leadership, but has afforded me the scheduled time and occasion to connect with committed and passionate women in the field of education. The questions presented to each of the interviewees allowed me to connect, listen, learn, and reflect upon my own experiences. In addition, I discovered each woman's experience leading up to and while in the role of secondary principal.

Creswell (2009) indicates that the final step in data analysis involves making an interpretation or creating meaning of the data collected. Lincoln & Guba (1985) ask, "What were the lessons learned?" The information in this chapter represents months of preparation, persistence, and consideration of hours of conversation that consisted of intense, conflicting, and humorous stories and experiences. My objective is to present my interviewing experiences in addition to the findings of the careful analysis and coding of the acquired data.

Educational leaders encounter challenges on a daily basis. These challenges come from a variety of sources: students, parents, teachers and staff, stakeholders, and state and federal entities. The secondary principalship is not exempt from challenges; employing and retention of quality leaders is of utmost importance. The issue that emerges in a profession that is predominately female is the disproportionate representation of women in the role of secondary principal.

By accomplishing the in-depth interviews of four successful secondary female principals, I have been able to add to the current literature and accomplish my four initial objectives.

1. Create an awareness of the skill set, style, and background needed allowing female educators to consider and pursue a secondary principalship
2. Offer the necessary information for female educators who pursue a secondary principalship who must be aware and prepared for the obstacles and challenges they may encounter
3. Encourage females who fear advancement in secondary education due to stereotypes and/or leave the profession due to negative experiences
4. Provide substantive information to administrator preparation programs that will assist in designing instruction to support women interested in becoming secondary principals

As I compiled, analyzed, and interpreted the various sources of data, Critical Feminist Theory and a Multiple Case Study approach provided the historical and philosophical framework for understanding the unique experiences of successful secondary female principals. This particular research design and theory provided the lens for viewing and acquiring common characteristics of women who have survived and sustained a successful and effective career in secondary education.

The specific research questions addressed in this study were

1. Tell me about your journey in education and what you feel has contributed to your success as a female leader.
2. What has been the most difficult area to navigate?
3. What are the characteristics that are uniquely female that contribute, influence, impact or make a difference in a leadership role?

4. In your opinion, what are the characteristics that create roadblocks or hinder female leaders?
5. What didn't I ask that you want to comment on?

Participant Interview Process

The participant interview process was the most enjoyable experience for me. I was able to learn firsthand the experiences, the characteristics, barriers, and the overall journey of several female secondary principals. I was anxious to get started and a little disappointed when the interviews were completed.

Contact with the participants was accomplished by sending a recruitment email. In the email I noted who recommended them, explained my research objective, reviewed my promise for anonymity and confidentiality, and explained the consent form. I had created three lists – A, B, and C. I began with my A list, as those were female principals with whom I was familiar due to their educational accomplishments within the state. My B and C lists were women who were recommended to me, but I had limited prior knowledge of their accomplishments and/or careers.

I had email addresses for all but one, who was recently retired, and was able to obtain a phone number for her. To my surprise and delight, every woman on my A list had a positive response. All of the scheduling was done via email, around their schedule, and at a location convenient for each one.

I am aware of how busy the end of the school year can be for building principals. Wrapping up an educational year is arduous and demanding. Knowing the time constraints and schedules, I planned on having one concise interview with each participant. I felt I could establish a rapport with the participants and accomplish the goal of acquiring the desired information in one 60 to 90-minute session, without compromising the quality of my study. I

scheduled all of my interviews in June, within a three-week time span. Three of the four interviews took place at the school building where they were employed, two in their office, one in a nearby conference room. One interview took place at a local coffee shop convenient for her on that particular day.

Description of the Sample

Of the four candidates agreeing to participate in this study, two were currently secondary building principals, one was recently retired, and the other was leaving the principalship to become a consultant with an educational agency supporting public and private schools. The participants had been in the position of secondary leadership for varying lengths of time. The shortest tenure was 13 years, the longest length of tenure was over 20 years, while the average length of tenure for the four participants was 17.8 years.

The interviews themselves were comfortable and relaxed experiences. The participants were welcoming and eager to tell their stories. Each one of them had reviewed the questions that I had sent prior to us meeting, had some type of notes prepared, and were candidly honest. In fact, I left each interview with the conviction that I had truly connected with a female colleague with whom I would continue to stay in contact with in the future. Only keep the above paragraph in this section.

Participant Profiles

A total of four women were chosen for participation in this study. A brief description of the participants and their experiences, and backgrounds provides a perspective into the comprehensive journey up to this point in time. Each participant was given a pseudonym to protect their identities and ensure their confidentiality and are presented in alphabetical order, not

in order of their participation during the interview process. In addition, this study does not identify the location(s) of their past or present employment.

Abigail – Attended a private religious school, as her parents were Catholic, “good and old fashioned, middle class folks.” She was the middle daughter of three girls and graduated in the 70’s, which was “definitely an era of secretaries nurses, and teachers.” She attended a state university and double majored in Speech and Theatre, and English. Abigail is a tall, composed woman who emits confidence in the way she interacts and carries herself. She began student teaching in 1974 in a large metropolitan high school. Her experience as a student teacher, teacher, assistant principal, middle school principal, and high school principal have been at various schools within the same district. Abigail has over 30 years in education and at the time of the interview was the principal in a high school that served 1,600 students grades 9-12 with 40% of the student body being minority and economically disadvantaged. She states, “I was raised to be a hard worker, never make excuses, and be passionate about what you want to do.” She loves teaching and felt she was called to it.

Betty – Was born and raised in the state in which she was employed during her career. She attended a state university and graduated with certification in all sciences. She attained her Masters in Counseling, and later her Doctorate in Education and always felt she was very marketable. Betty is small in stature but oozes enthusiasm and fearlessness in her demeanor. She moved around the state frequently because of her husband’s career but “got calls every time we moved and I always had a job.” She worked as a teacher, guidance counselor, assistant principal, and principal. Although she never really had aspirations of administration because of her frequent moving, she later decided, “Maybe I really ought to be looking down the road.” Betty has over 20 years in education, and at the time of the interview, was two years retired from

a principalship in a high school that served 1,900 students grades 10-12 with 21% of the student body being minority and 14% economically disadvantaged. In hindsight she indicates, “I should have followed my career path instead of my husband’s.”

Claire – She attended a small, private college that she “thought was a good match” within the state she was born. Her first job was in special education in the 70s during the time period “where special education was a real push.” She taught special education for 16 years, was instrumental in the startup of alternative high school, principal at a small high school in a rural setting, then became principal at a private religious high school. Claire is of average height, composed and well dressed, humble, and soft-spoken. When she contemplated applying for the position of high school principal she thought, “We’re Catholic, my husband is a deacon, well, pshhhh, they are never going to hire a female.” Claire currently serves as the principal in a private, religious school that serves approximately 500 students with 4% being minority and a minimal number of economically disadvantaged. When discussing her journey and educational leadership, Claire said, “I guess I have a little advantage, if you will, in that my husband was in education.” Claire was humble and poised and the most reserved of all the participants during our interview.

Delanie – She attended a local state university renowned for its stellar teaching program. Although she had intentions of majoring in accounting or engineering, due to circumstances, she was “led back to teaching within a year.” Delanie said, “School was always really important to me even when growing up, it was my safe place.” She graduated with an elementary education major, a math minor, a middle school emphasis and coaching endorsement. Delanie was gregarious and expressive, with a smile and laugh that encouraged conversation. She has worked as an elementary teacher in a talented and gifted program, middle school math teacher, coach,

high school assistant principal, and high school principal. Delanie has over 20 years in education and at the time of the interview was the principal in a junior-senior high school, which served 600 students grades 7-12 with 10% of the student body being minority and 22% economically disadvantaged. When Delanie transitioned to educational administration during her first day on the job, the superintendent pulled her into his office and informed her that, “ the high school principal didn’t want to hire me, that he wanted to hire one of the ‘boys’ in the school but the school board wouldn’t accept that...I had a challenge right away.” Delanie was younger than the other participants. She exuded confidence, strength, and conviction during our conversation.

Analysis of the Data

Each woman was open, unguarded, and genuine. They readily told multiple stories, some humorous and others shocking, which made the interview experience very authentic and poignant. The findings of my research of female secondary principals revealed specific themes of common characteristics of women who have survived and sustained a successful and effective career in secondary education. In addition, other themes emerged from the conversations. Their responses were organized by each question, emphasizing the commonalities of each participant.

Research Question 1: Tell me about your journey in education and what you feel has contributed to your success as a female leader. The following topics emerged in each interview in relation to this particular question:

1. All of the women spent a longer period of time in the classroom before making the decision to become an administrator. This supported the literature reviewed and the recent state report published by the Department of Education. Women tend be older and have more district experience than their male counterparts. All of the women had a wide array of experiences in education beyond the classroom, such as: committee chairs,

coaching, teacher-leaders, curriculum, and discipline responsibilities. This theme was not surprising since females tend to spend a longer amount of time in the teaching field prior to becoming a principal. What was a surprise was the wide-range of experiences each woman had acquired during their career.

2. All women were well read and referred to current literature relevant to educational leadership. Each woman referred to an author or article at some point in the conversation, some more than others. Abigail referenced Professional Learning Communities when she said, “discovered Rick DuFour and PLC, knew it was something I would never leave. I had been to Carol Tomlinson in Virginia and knew differentiated instruction...I could present too, because I knew it.” Betty said, “How am I going to get this done? I can’t remember his name, Kelly or Todd, who always talks about the Figure Five Stars, don’t pay attention to the others, and work with your Five Stars.” Finally, Delanie referred to something she had seen or read in reference to male and female communication.
3. All of the women were encouraged to pursue leadership by another person. The encouragement came from males and females, all in the field of education. A professor who said, “You need to think about this, we need good female leaders” encouraged Abigail. Betty was encouraged by a male superintendent to apply for a principal job and to pursue her doctorate. A gentleman from the high school approached Claire who encouraged her to apply for the alternative leadership job, knowing her background and experience with special education. Delanie mentioned that the district she worked for believed in professional advancement and didn’t tie her to a contract, thus encouraging her to take the job.

4. All women mentioned family commitments or involvement influencing their decision to pursue and/or delay a career in education and educational leadership. This was an equally dominant theme from all participants. Extended or immediate family contributed in some way to their decision to either pursue a career in education and/or delayed decisions about entering the principalship. Abigail mentioned that she “got married, had a couple little boys very close together and decided to stay out for a couple years.” Her decision to go back to school and get her master’s degree in administration was because “the kids were at an age, you know middle school and I had a great husband and I knew he could figure this out with me.” Betty said, “My children were in college by the time I went into administration.” Claire mentioned that when she got her master’s degree and was looking for an administration position that she, “still had kids in high school and my husband taught, so I knew that I probably wasn’t going to be able to necessarily move out of the area to get a principal job.” Delanie talked about “spending a lot of time at school, and being just married and trying to work on marriage. My first administrative job was very challenging.” Three of the four principals had children that were older when they made the decision to pursue administration. The fourth woman was single, following a divorce while she was principal.
5. Each one referred to their concern for children and/or students. Abigail mentioned her concern for the high dropout rate and that “nobody seemed to care.” Betty referred to having to “figure out new ways to teach children and get them successful.” Claire talked about enjoying her experience in an alternative setting because “you could do a lot creative things to meet kids’ needs.” Delanie talked about how she enjoyed working with

migrant families, how “it’s neat to see how important education is” and helping children graduate from high school.

Research Question 2: What has been the most difficult area to navigate? The following topics emerged in each interview in relation to this particular question:

1. Each woman brought up gender but offered different examples, circumstances, and context. Abigail did not reference gender with this question. In fact, her response to the initial question was, “This has nothing to do with being female, right?” She did reference the gender issue later in the conversation while answering other questions. Betty talked about not getting a job for which she had applied and wondered what the new principal had that she didn’t, to which a colleague replied, “a zipper.” She indicated that the “good ol’ boys network is alive and well but that women are infiltrating because education has changed.” She also added that, “I don’t think it’s (administration) a default career anymore.” Claire responded, “It’s probably just the whole boys’ club image, I guess I just decided early on that’s not a battle I’m going to fight.” She added, “It was irritating to me as a teacher and it’s irritating to me as an administrator. I hate to be stereotypical but it hasn’t changed.” Delanie replied, “I’m not really this big feminist, I’m not really big into that.” She then went on to elaborate how she has experienced female teachers and mothers responding to her differently than her male counterpart, and that she has observed and experienced male sporting officials’ responses to aggressive and motivating female coaches. Each response was uniquely different but addressed gender in some manner.
2. They each brought up support and struggles with relationships while administrators, although the degree that this was an issue varied with each. Abigail and Betty both

referred to groups of teacher friends that they continued to have close relationships with and who provided feedback and support even now. Claire openly discussed being questioned by parents and that, “they just think that some roles should better be held by men. I know my boss feels this way.” Delanie discussed that motivating women has been the most difficult area for her, “with me I have to be very to the point and short...with women, I have to somehow make it their idea...it’s been very hard for me”

3. Experience and age added a different perspective over time about what was difficult to navigate. Abigail said she was blessed to have the experiences she had and referenced the length of time she spent as a teacher before taking the plunge into administration. Betty talked about how she had seen education changing and requiring different skills and longevity “gives you a bag of tricks.” Claire said in reference to this question, “A year from now is this really going to matter...maybe if I were younger I might fight it.” Delanie said in reference to this question, “Now I will say, as I’ve gotten older it’s getting easier.”

Research Question 3: What are the characteristics that are uniquely female that contribute, influence, impact or make a difference in a leadership role? The following topics emerged in each interview in relation to this particular question:

1. All the women referenced being intuitive and anticipating others’ responses as a characteristic that was uniquely female. Abigail referred to women, “being able to discern the work that needs to be done.” Delanie talked about intuitiveness being, “a female thing and that reading people is a female thing.” She referenced, “paying attention to the little voice” and then gave several examples of how that has worked in

her career. Betty talked about the importance of anticipating what others would do and thinking it through in advance, “always think about the unintended consequences.”

2. Listening was mentioned as a skill that is needed in the position of secondary principal.

Two referenced listening as gender neutral but an important skill for the position. Betty said, “You have to be a listener because I think we need to hear everybody’s story.”

Abigail responded with, “Shame on us, if we’re holding anything back. I simply think I am aware of never wanting to dominate the conversation.” Claire and Delanie felt that listening was definitely a female trait. Claire referenced that often males felt “their way was the only way, but I’m willing to listen to others’ ways before I decide it’s got to be my way.” Delanie said, “Listening skills, you have to listen more than you talk. Women just tend to listen and hear and be able to tell you that you’ve been heard. I think that is really important in this job.” Although Abigail talked about women’s need to talk and get feedback and how they have groups of friends more so than men, she did say, “I clock how much I talk in meetings.” She remembered two of her male principals coming back to the building after administration meetings talking about, “two female principals who talked too much and how the guys would get frustrated.”

3. Collaboration, nurturing, and the value of relationships were mentioned by all four of the women. Abigail talked about “being transparent is important for a leader...we need to talk and get feedback.” Betty discussed the value of creating a plan and “to collaborate and bring people on board.” Claire pointed out, “I think that females find it much easier to work in a collaborative style than many men would.” She also said, “Maybe it’s the way we’re wired to relationships or something?” Finally, Delanie talked about the importance of interpersonal skills and “it’s about nurturing...just that making

relationships.” Two specifically referenced the importance of being receptive to and the need for feedback.

4. Two of the participants discussed being careful in mixed groups about talking too much. Abigail said, “I don’t hold back in meetings, but I clock how much I talk and I am ashamed sometimes. I think I am aware of never wanting to dominate the conversation.” Delanie said, “I’ve literally had to be very quiet, and just sit back until they ask. If you talk too much, you can be looked at as a smarty pants. It’s finding that balance of communication. You just really have to gauge what that good balance of communication is.”
5. Two topics that were mentioned, more than once by two of the women is that over thinking could be detrimental and that women have to “work harder than everybody else.” Other arbitrary characteristics and skills mentioned were the importance of organization, empathy, patience, and having a sense of humor.

Research Question 4: In your opinion, what are the characteristics that create roadblocks or hinder female leaders? The following topics emerged in each interview in relation to this particular question:

1. Navigating personal and professional life was something that created roadblocks or in some cases contributed to them beginning secondary administration at a later time. According to Abigail, “for some the pulls of motherhood and going to all the kids’ events” were hurdles to be overcome. Although in her experience she said, “I was blessed cause I didn’t really have that. I just wouldn’t go home, the kids were gone.” Betty clearly stated that, “My children were in college by the time I went into administration.” Claire referenced her kids being older when she first became a principal

but talked about, “There’s sometimes caregiver issues that maybe tend to fall more to the female.” She referenced her husband’s health, children, grandchildren and her elderly mother. Claire said, “I do think it probably tends to be the female that goes in those situations.” Delanie’s experience was different in that she was married, divorced, with no children. She did reference her first year in administration and working long hours and going through her divorce being very difficult.

2. All of the participants referenced the importance of maintaining their composure or their overall demeanor as being a critical characteristic in this job and the possibility of those hindering females in the position of secondary principalship. Abigail mentioned a colleague “Coming off really cocky like it’s all me, a little pushy and they don’t like her as well. I think it’s the art of knowing, you have to nurture and be firm.” She summarized by adding, “The roadblock for some females is that they don’t wear it on their sleeves. When you lead a building you have to put in some humility.” Betty said, “You’ve got to be courageous and not intimidated by anything or anyone. You have to stand your ground. If you’re upset about something you’ve gotten vulnerable, you don’t want people to know.” Claire talked about her feelings about people getting into administration too young and, “They don’t have the life experiences and limited classroom experience. I think that there’s some black and white decisions being made sometimes that aren’t always best for kids.” Delanie articulated her experiences, “I had just mentioned this, and it’s that emotion, the composure thing. If you’re nurturing someone, that’s an appearance of weakness. I’ve never been a big time crier but there are times when kids are hurting. I’ve spent most of my life hiding my feelings that it’s really hard to put on that mask. I’ve learned I’ve got to put on that mask a lot more and just

always have a smile on my face. We don't want kids to come to school that way. We want kids to be open and tell us what's going on and that's been a hard thing, it's been hard."

3. There were mixed responses to this question, which were based on their experiences and were of interest. Abigail felt that, "maybe the games that women feel like they have to play." Betty talked about office arrangement and positioning yourself in your office, "I also think there's a way you do your office, and I don't know whether this plays into anything, but I rarely sit behind my desk if I were meeting someone. If I did, I would choose it to be that way. You try to make it as user friendly as it can be and still get the job done." Claire said, "All the other principals are male, when we have administrative team meeting, I definitely think that if I wasn't there bringing up things from my point of view that not as good decisions would get made. You know, they wouldn't be as good for kids because I just think I look at things differently. And I think it's a blessing for a school district to have a female in some leadership role because I just think that they, that we bring something that other people don't. And that men, for the most part don't, some do. But for the most part they don't." The final comment Delanie made one of the most insightful and honest comments in reference to roadblock for females in secondary administration. She said, "I'm going to say one other thing. I'm just going to say it because of the way that things have kind of changed for me, that is your appearance. The way you look because I have been treated differently. But I've noticed just being treated a little bit differently based on appearance compared to some of my male counterparts."

My final question was at the conclusion of each interview. This was intentionally done, as I wanted each woman to have the opportunity to reference any subject matter that they may not have been able to address with the first four questions.

Research Question 5: What didn't I ask that you want to comment on?

1. Every woman I talked with responded to this question with comments that referred to this position being hard work, long hours. Abigail stated in reference to the work and leaving the principalship, "It's hard work, it's challenging. It's not the lack of energy; it's the night events. I have grandkids and I don't want the nights anymore. I want to be done when I'm done." Betty clearly articulated, "If you're really good at the secondary job, there are lots and lots of hours. I mean you're there 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. and that's routine. What I found was they didn't care that I had an associate attend a concert or attend a basketball game. They wanted the principal. And my life was such that I could do that. If I didn't have to work nights, I would have stayed. I can keep doing the days for a long time. Yea, it's a lot of hours. You have to be a worker bee and never satisfied with the status quo" Claire referenced, "Getting tired.... dealing with the parents, paperwork, and requirements. If you could just deal with the kids." Delanie openly said, "I do believe that women have to work harder and to prove themselves, I really do. I'm not sure that's recognized but I think that it's then that you're acceptable to this position, if you work harder." Later in the conversation she talked about how hard it is to get away, "This year I've pretty much worked seven days a week and I'm just burnt."
2. Each one of the women reference necessary leadership characteristics in some manner. Abigail said, "I've learned something from every single leader I've worked with, male or female." She jokingly talked about learning to have a neat desk from one, another she

talked about being a master delegator, and another's "disposition was fabulous." Betty said, "I think you have to put a conscious effort into being the person that should be in that leadership role. You have to control...get it in your head and your body language. I think women are sometimes more prone to not controlling it." She also referenced "have to have tough skin. It's a very demanding job and you've got to let all the dogs bark at you and walk away and think 'well, I am really doing this well.' There are naysayers. You've just got to love it, that's the bottom line. If you don't love it, it's not the job for you." Claire said, "I would encourage women to go into the field but I think you have to look at this whole dynamic and decide if you are going to fight battles or if you're going to go about your business. You can fight for equality or recognition but if you're going down that path then you're going to waste a lot of energy that you could be giving to your students. I think if you use your gifts and are fair and honest that's the key." Delanie talked about the importance of getting together with other principals in her area, "It's taken some time but it's been chipping away at developing relationships. I touch base with every administrator and talk about their school, just so they know I'm there. I love my principals group."

3. Other random topics that surfaced during this last question were organization and preparation. Abigail mentioned, "Being prepared for every meeting". She talked about every administrator needs to have "top notch organizational skills." Betty confirmed this by saying, "Organization is a key thing and I think women are very good at that. I think we're used to multitasking. Watch for details because everybody's looking to find what you are doing wrong." Two of women talked about getting close to people and the difficulty of leaving a job because of the relationships they had with staff. Abigail said,

“Every place I’ve ever been, I feel fortunate. In some ways the hardest part of leaving is leaving the leadership.” Betty said, “I’ve cried every job I’ve ever left. I mean I had a hard time. I was tight with the faculty.” Finally, two of the women talked about being treated or treating women administrators differently either due to family or not having a family. Betty said, “I do remember with females, I was very conscious of their home life. Not so much with males, now that I’m reflecting on it.” Delanie said that she definitely thought the fact that she was single woman allowed others to expect her to give up her plans, “I had to give up my plans to stay around for everything else. I don’t think it happens as much with a single male, I’ve seen it on my team. It’s really interesting”

Summary

The data accumulated through the in-depth interview process and presented in this chapter is intended to further illuminate and expound on the original objective of this research, which was to examine the lives and experiences of four women who have maintained successful and effective careers as a secondary principal. The within case analysis and cross-case analysis was completed and coding examined.

The literature pertaining to qualitative research points out that through this process certain patterns and themes should emerge from the data. Twenty-five pattern matches occurred across all four interviews. Twenty-two of the patterns were supported by literature and three were not suggested by the literature.

After all coding was completed the responses to the five interview questions were cross-referenced, compared, and evaluated for specific themes. The acquired interviews were compared to one another along with my fieldnotes and observations thus triangulating the data.

Creswell (2007) proposes using the qualitative method allows themes to emerge during inquiry, but it usually follows the pattern of scientific research.

Thirty-one topics resulted from this study. The majority of the issues were addressed in the literature review related to women in the work force. The subject matter acquired during this study specifically focused on issues as it related to women in secondary education. The data were then analyzed for specific themes. The coding were used to construct a small number of themes or categories, about five to seven, and these themes are the ones that appear as major findings in a qualitative study (Creswell, 2009).

Some topics materialized during the interviews that were surprising and unexpected but were not referenced in the literature. The topics were not consistently mentioned by all of the participants and therefore were not considered emerging themes, however they were noteworthy and are listed below:

1. Keeping emotions in check, not allowing vulnerability, thick skin due to stereotypes
2. Feeling maternal or nurturing towards younger professionals or students
3. Feeling called or destined to their job
4. They were all born and raised in the state they now worked
5. Appearance played a bigger part for women than did men
6. Longevity in position if it weren't for the hours or night activities
7. Other women and/or mothers were more critical of them as a principal
8. Hardship and tug of caring for children, grandchildren, and aging parents

The above list was of particular interest to me as it revealed subject matter that created some curiosity and fascination to explore to explore further.

There were five distinct themes that were consistently repeated in every face-to-face interview. The five themes that surfaced during the course of each interview with each of the female principals were:

1. All participants had some kind of support – husbands, extended family, and a network of friends and/or colleagues.
2. Interpersonal or social skills were deemed important and identified as required leadership characteristics.
3. The participants in the study were passionate about their work. They enjoyed their work and were committed to the work and to kids.
4. Being reflective was considered an important aspect of being an effective leader and practiced by the participants.
5. Each of the participants verbalized an awareness of encountering of gender bias in their journey of secondary leadership but did not allow these experiences to detour them.

This chapter presented an analysis of the qualitative data from the face-to-face interviews with four female secondary principals. This descriptive study identified the critical skills, various strategies, and forms of support that these women secondary principals in Iowa have implemented in an effort to overcome internal or external barriers in their positions. This study also offered the perspectives of women secondary principals based on their experiences with overcoming barriers while achieving and maintaining success in an underrepresented administrative position in education. The themes and details are elaborated, analyzed, and cross-examined at length in Chapter 5 in order to better understand and explain the commonalities and experiences of the participants and to ascertain the implications and application for all women seeking to maintain a successful career in secondary administration.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to ascertain an explanation for the disproportionate representation of women in the role of secondary principal in education and to uncover the attributes and characteristics that contribute to successful female leadership in secondary education.

Chapter 1 offered a snapshot of why this topic is relevant and well timed. Although there are increasingly more women in administrative positions worldwide, recent literature indicates that inequity remains an issue. What is of greater concern to me as a female administrator in education is that at the time of this study there was insufficient literature on this subject as it related to women in the United States. In spite of the laws intent on outlawing discrimination, women in general are not equally represented in management positions and specifically in secondary principalships. Chapter 2 reviewed the current literature on women in the workforce. Since there remains a shortage of literature specific to women in the role of secondary principal, I evaluated the literature that examined women in other unrepresented leadership roles. The literature on women in business management, women in the armed forces, women in higher education, women as school superintendents, and women in school leadership globally was plentiful and cross-referencing the materials created inferences that can be applied to women in secondary educational leadership.

Chapter 3 described this qualitative, multiple case study viewed through the lens of Critical Feminist Theory. Provided in the chapter were the details of the interview process, the instrumentation, how the data would be analyzed, coded, and bracketed, and ultimately what was discovered. Although there is always the risk of researcher bias, explaining the process and

results of the methodology did give evidence that there were common characteristics and attributes of successful secondary female principals.

Chapter 4 articulated the findings of the research study. We became increasingly aware of why they were in their present occupation and how they have managed to persevere in a profession with so few women.

Chapter 5 reviews and compares the results of this study with previous research in the areas of barriers, skills, characteristics, experiences, strategies, and forms of support that women secondary principals identified as being critical to experiencing success in the principalship.

Summary of the Study

When reviewing the data from the Iowa Department of Education (2010), it became apparent that female principals in Iowa tend to be older, have more advanced degrees, more total years of experience, and more district experience. The majority of female principals (50.4%) are also at the elementary level, while the majority of secondary principals (76%) were male.

Based on the large number of females represented in the teaching occupation, it would seem logical that the proportion of female leaders in education would be reflective of the profession as a whole, whether it is at the elementary, secondary level, or central office. Sandberg (2013) asserted, “The blunt truth is that men still run the world” (p. 5). Women have slowly and steadily advanced, but despite the gains, the percentage of women in top leadership positions in America has barely budged. In spite of the fact that women outpace men in educational achievement, women have ceased making real progress at the top of any industry.

My own experience and current research data led me to this research topic. I was curious as to why the limited number of females represented in secondary principalships still exists. In this study I attempted to explore the various reasons for this phenomenon in the

disproportionality by seeking out and interviewing women in secondary administration who have had a prolonged and successful career. The target population of my research was current or recently retired secondary female principals. Although my goal was to stay demographically within central Iowa for convenience and expediency, I discovered that there were few female secondary principals in central Iowa and some extended travel would be required to collect extensive experiences that would be knowledgeable and informed on this subject. It was essential to have secondary female principals who had longevity in this career, without advancement to superintendent. I wanted to wholly focus on successful women in the role of secondary principal and concentrate on their insightfulness.

The specific research questions addressed in this study were:

1. Tell me about your journey in education and what you feel has contributed to your success as a female leader.
2. What has been the most difficult area to navigate?
3. What are the characteristics that are uniquely female that contribute, influence, impact or make a difference in a leadership role?
4. In your opinion, what are the characteristics that create roadblocks or hinder female leaders?
5. What didn't I ask that you want to comment on?

The following sections of this chapter will further examine the responses to the research questions and the emergent themes that unmistakably surfaced at the end of six hours of interviews, 30 hours of transcribing, and 96 pages of transcribed interviews. In addition, the surprising and unexpected anomalies that surfaced will be addressed as well as the conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further study.

Major Findings

Five Participant Similarities

All four of the participants of this study had similarities that were mostly supported by the literature but were not intentionally sought out when selecting the sample population for interviews.

Only Female Administrator

Each of the participants interviewed was the only female secondary principal either in the district or conference. Sipe Fisher & Johnston (2009) pointed out that the presence and effects of gender inequity tend to be underestimated or overlooked causing people to perceive that all workplaces are gender neutral. Besen & Kimmel (2006) stated that women comprise 66% of the U.S. workforce, yet only 21% hold middle management positions and a mere 15% are at the senior management level. Women became 50% of the college graduates in the United States in the early 1980s. Since that time, women have slowly and steadily advanced, earning more and more of the college degrees, taking more entry level jobs, and entering fields previously dominated by men (Sandberg, 2013). In spite of these gains, the percentage of women at the top of corporate America has barely shifted. It would appear that this is true in the principal role as indicated by the Iowa Department of Education (Condition of Education, 2010), which reported that 75% of the profession was female and yet there were 63% male full time public school principals compared to 37% female principals. The numbers shrink and become increasingly glaring when specifically looking at secondary principals; the females represented a mere 24%.

Extensive Experiences

Another similarity that was supported by the current literature was that all five of the women in this study were older with extensive previous experiences. What was surprising was

the wide-range of experiences each woman had acquired during their career. Several of the women expressed awareness of their longevity in the field of education and the benefit of extensive experiences brought into their current position. Betty articulated, “My children were in college by the time I went into administration.” She also elaborated on the extensive opportunities she had in the teaching field such as planning professional development, heading the guidance department, writing curriculum, and supervising student discipline. Abigail talked about, “How she learned and honed the craft of teaching and loved it.” She also excitedly reflected on her involvement with a university and the leadership program, learning communities, and curriculum mapping. Claire spent 16 years as a special education teacher and several years in an alternative setting before entering administration. Delanie spent several years as a middle school math teacher, a gifted and talented teacher and coach before becoming a principal. In addition to exhaustive experiences in the teaching profession, all served as assistant principals in a middle school or high school before becoming head principals. Three of the four participants suspended their transition into administration until their children were older. The fourth participant had no children. Metz and Moss (2008) indicated that females were less likely to have children than their male counterparts, and women more than men were still more likely to suspend their careers temporarily to assume the responsibilities of the care and nurturing of dependents. This was evident in the participants interviewed for this study.

Encouragement for Leadership

The participants in this study were all encouraged or nudged into educational leadership by a person or experience. A professor in Abigail’s master’s program said, “You need to think about this, we need good female leaders.” Betty was prompted to apply for a leadership position in another district when she expressed an interest in an assistant principal job in her current

district. When she approached the principal to express an interest he responded with, “Betty, the school board will never hire a female in this position.” Betty was hurt because of all the work she had done for him and the school. She left the district that summer for an assistant principal job in another district. Claire left education and was working in retail when someone from the high school approached her and asked if she would be interested in starting the alternative school because of her special education experience and background. That experience prompted her to pursue her master’s degree in administration, which led to her next job as principal. Delanie had a similar experience as Betty. Two principal positions opened in her district. Delanie said, “You knew who was going to get the jobs. There were two males and you just knew they were being groomed even though you were given leadership opportunities. You just kind of knew who was going to get the job and the same people got the job that I knew were going to get the job.” This experience influenced her decision to apply elsewhere. Ellen Eckman (2003) pointed out in her research that women often reported encouragement from professors, other faculty members, and training programs in the development of their career aspirations. While this seems to apply to two of the participants in this study, the other two women were given the impetus to move in that direction because of the reality of gender bias within their present district.

Additional literature articulates that women are often hesitant to acknowledge their skills and accomplishments and feel undeserving and fraudulent. Sandberg (2013) points out that women consistently underestimate themselves and that studies in multiple industries have shown that women often judge their own performance as worse than it actually is. Ultimately, it appears that outside sources, either people or circumstances, made these women move in the direction of secondary principalship.

Knowledgeable

The four participants appeared to be well read or at least aware of current literature related to education. This was not a topic I anticipated would appear and was pleasantly surprised. Although the literature didn't directly address this topic, what was addressed in the literature was the fact that women frequently served longer in the teaching role (Celikten, 2010) than their male counterparts. Additionally, the literature points out that more females than males have taken post-master's work and have completed their doctorate degrees (Kochan, Spencer, Mathews, 2000). Finally, women tend to be older when entering the administration field as seen in literature (Iowa Department of Education, 2010). All of these factors appear to contribute to the comments and references made during the interviews to current and relevant literature on various subject related to education. Abigail referenced authors that had written about professional learning communities. Delanie referred to the literature on female principals "being lowballed" when it came to their male counterparts. Betty discussed the author who talks about "five stars" and her book club of educators who regularly get together. Claire candidly referenced the data and literature on women in private school versus public when it comes to representation. Although some of the women appeared to be more well-read than others, each of them mentioned something they had read that corresponded with our discussion. I felt that this collective revelation was an indicator of the coping skills these women had developed to maintain a professional edge and assist them in navigating potential barriers in education.

Family and Education

One of the most interesting similarities that was not recognized until I began cross-referencing the accumulated data from each interview was that each female principal had some past and/or present connection to education influenced by family. Abigail's husband was a

teacher. Betty's husband was a superintendent. Claire's father was the president of the school board where her family resided and her husband was a teacher. Although Delanie didn't have a direct connection by family, she was connected to the school environment because of her family situation. Delanie's experience was the most unique in that she felt drawn towards school and education because her parents divorced when she was in second grade and her mother was physically and mentally abusive. Delanie spoke honestly about her attraction to school, "School was always really important to me even growing up. It was my safe place. I went to school just to feel good. So it led me back to education in college where it felt safe."

Emergent Themes

Listed above were five notable similarities surprisingly and unpredictably discovered upon reviewing the participants' interviews. While those were worth mentioning and might spur additional research, I wanted to focus on the developing and common themes relevant to the original purpose of the study. Current data suggest the number of women in educational leadership positions is increasing but it continues to be inequitable as compared to men in the positions. What happens to women in secondary educational leadership? Are there barriers that hinder them from leadership positions or do they opt out? What are the difficulties or challenges these women face in navigating the ladder to the top? What skill set or leadership style do they find helpful? What impeded their path to educational leadership?

My goal was to discover if the participants in this study encountered similar experiences that were articulated in the current research related to being a female secondary principal. My objective was to uncover common or similar skills and strategies the female participants implemented that attributed to their successful tenure as a secondary principal. In the end, five themes materialized. In the book *Lean In* (2013) Sandberg asserts, "First we must decide that

true equality is long overdue and will be achieved only when more women rise to the top of every government and industry. Then we have to do the hard work of getting there”

(p. 159). The following themes are indicative of this declaration.

Theme 1: All participants had some kind of support – husbands, extended family, and a network of friends and/or colleagues.

This was not a surprising finding as it pointed to and was supported by much of the past and present literature on the subject of women leadership. What was surprising was that my participants actually echoed the same sentiment. Eckman (2003) found in her research that women principals described this theme of support and reiterated that they couldn’t have done it alone. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) discussed the power in leaders who deliberately form widespread social relationships and the impact these networks have had in women leading collectively. This support was referenced in the support of husbands, extended families, parents, and other relatives. Sandberg (2013) in her book *Lean In*, devoted a whole chapter to the topic of the importance of having a supportive partner and the positive and negative impact this can have on a career.

All participants referenced this support during their interview in some manner. Abigail stated, “I had a great husband, so I knew that he could figure this out with me.” She also mentioned, “Something that I think is uniquely female is how often women have groups of friends that we have to talk to. So the fact that we need to talk and that we need to get feedback might be more female.” Betty referenced having a fabulous group of friends that she worked with and organized shopping sprees, card group, a book club, and regularly scheduled breakfasts and lunches together. Claire talked about her first administrative position being the hardest on her husband. She moved and got an apartment for her new job and they commuted for two

years. She said, “He did the majority of the driving because I was involved with weekend commitments.” Claire added, “I guess I have a little advantage in that my husband was in education. He understood the mindset and commitment.” Finally, Delanie talked about a principals group and email group that she loves and that one of her best friend attends. She declared, “I just love that group.”

Women lead differently than men. Leadership is relational according to Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011). The importance placed on relationships is not only observed in a female’s leadership style but also in the manner in which women recognize and acknowledge how others have supported their journey in secondary administration.

Theme 2: Interpersonal or social skills were deemed important and identified as required leadership characteristics. Examples of skills noted by participants of this study were many: clear communication, sense of humor, empathy, patience, listening, collaboration, nurturing, intuitiveness, composure or attitude, and being inclusive. Although these specific skills were considered necessary for all successful educational leaders, male or female, each participant agreed that many of these characteristics were uniquely female, especially intuitiveness.

Abigail talked about “leading with the head and the heart.” Later in our conversation she also mentioned that in order “to be a really good principal you have to have really, really good communication skills.” She pointed out, “You have to communicate in a way that develops collective capacity. You also have to nurture and you have to be firm. I guess I think it’s a female trait of mothering, of nurturing these people that you know.” She talked about growing and acquiring skill and the importance of “the communication piece, I have seen some folks really fall down. When I taught, I would tell my students that 90% of the people that lose their jobs not because they can’t do the job or the work, they lose it because they don’t communicate

appropriately.” Betty referenced the importance of “being a listener and making yourself available” and “have to collaborate and portray yourself as a collaborator.” Claire emphatically stated, “I think I have that empathy, my decisions aren’t always black and white. That’s where the empathy comes in, treating your teachers and kids with a sense of dignity. It’s just more an empathy, a caring, I guess.” Later in the conversation she reiterated a statement made by Abigail in another interview and said, “I think you lead with your heart a little more than just lead with your head.” She also discussed “Dealing with the whole child more than the instructional child. I think females are a little more understanding of the circumstances outside the norm. I think they have more patience overall.” Claire was persuasive when she stated, “We are wired to relationships. We are still the main nurturers as parents. I mean society has allowed us to be. It’s still not very acceptable for men to do some of those things.” Delanie referenced interpersonal or social skills when she answered the question about what characteristics are uniquely female. She stated, “I think the nurturing part. I think males can be nurturing but I do think that whole nurturing part with staff and students it’s about relationships. I’ve learned you have to throw quite a bit of humor in...having that intuitiveness too, I think that is a female thing and I think reading people is a female thing.” Delanie talked about paying attention to “that little voice” and listening skills, “I think you have to listen more than you talk.” She added, “Women just tend to listen and hear and be able to tell you’ve been heard. Your interpersonal skills of bringing and giving people the chance to be part of the group.”

Sherman (2000) in her research found a difference in leadership styles between males and females related to management, work environment, communications style, and decision-making and conflict resolution. “The women talk about the students more and are better

communicators” (p. 137). Sherman also identified female traits such as nurturing, comforting, empathy, connections, focus on relationship, and cooperation as reoccurring themes.

Celikten (2010) referenced Shakeshaft’s (1987) explanation of women’s administrative style being found in their language. Women administrators’ language emphasizes power with rather than power over. It was noted that women tend to lead in more transformative and inclusive ways than do their male counterparts, highlighting the importance of interpersonal skills of communication, collaboration, and inclusiveness as being a critical component of female leadership.

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) discussed that women still have a strong norm of caring although career and achievement expectations for women have changed in the last several decades. “Women have modeled ways to use power and make change through understanding, a process which requires listening, not just talking” (p. 91).

Wyatt (1992) suggested that the female model and the qualities that have traditionally and disparagingly been assigned as women’s weaknesses, such as sympathy, sensitivity, and a lack of killer instinct, may be superior and beneficial when it comes to bringing the best out of people.

Another interesting perspective on the leadership styles of women is explicated by Sandberg (2013) when she stated that cultural norms often require that women demonstrate nurturing qualities rather than competence. She stated that women are nurturing and should be nurturing. However, defying cultural expectations that women are anything but nice, can put women in a double-bind as they are judged as undeserving and selfish. She suggested that women, “Think personally, act communally” (p. 46). She asserted that women should adjust their approach and use the pronoun “we” instead of “I” in many situations. It appears to me that

the participants of this study have clearly learned the benefit of successfully applying feminine traits in leadership positions.

Theme 3: The participants in this study were passionate about their work. They enjoyed their work and were committed to the work and to kids; passion, commitment to the work, and impact on students seemed to be a general theme for these women in educational leadership. Each woman referred to her concern for children and/or students. It appeared that each one was mindful and concerned with the various demographic populations they served and desired to positively impact all students. This subject illustrated their reasoning for pursuing a career in educational leadership.

Sherman (2000) found in her study that women in administrative leadership considered themselves as teachers, were focused on instructional supports, made regular classroom visits, and desired to be close to children.

Dabney-Lieras (2008) found in her study on female superintendents that women unanimously agreed on the importance of the principalship as a vital pathway to the superintendency. She also noted that all of the women reported having high rates of job satisfaction and believed they had made a difference in the lives of students.

Abigail talked about how she was raised to be passionate about what she wanted to do. She said in reference to teaching, “I loved it and got better at it.” She pointed out that there were, “600 kids would come in as 9th graders and we’d graduate about 350 and nobody seemed to care. Nobody seemed to ask many questions about what was happening to the other 300. I got involved in school improvement efforts.” She also stated, “Every place I’ve been, I feel really, really fortunate. I know I could give more.” Betty stated, “Don’t be satisfied with the status quo. It’s a demanding job and you’ve got to be able to let all the dogs bark at you and

walk away and think, well, I'm really doing this well!" She later added, "You've got to love it. I mean that's the bottom line. You've got to love it or it's not the job for you." Claire openly commented, "It was a good move for me. Kids are kids, whether they're 6 years old. I mean high school kids are just little kids with big bodies. That's the way I view them. They still want you to praise them. They still want you to pay attention to what they are doing and they still want you to interact with them for the most part." Delanie made several different statements throughout the interview that conveyed her passion for the work. At one point she mentioned, "I love our migrant families." This was in reference to discussing the demographic change in her district and school. Later when discussing her journey she stated, "I fell in love instantly with middle school kids. I'm just going to tell you, that's where my heart is, in middle school."

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) described several studies on women's approach to administration feeling that the position was a huge responsibility and that it was imperative that women give it their all and do everything they can. A study by Simmons and Johnson (2008) was referenced that articulated the "passionate language" (p. 16) that women use in their leadership. Using passion served as a motivator for themselves and those with whom they worked. It was felt that passionate language changed the expectations of institutional behavior. In conclusion, leading with passion and hope may not mobilize action for women administrators, but they prevented the women in this study from becoming paralyzed by their life's realities and circumstances, helping them to maintain their resilience as they pushed their change agendas forward.

Theme 4: Being reflective was considered an important aspect of being an effective leader and practiced by the participants.

Obviously, there is not one, singular way that women lead, although research has identified preferences and approaches that characterize women's leadership. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) ascertain that women see situations differently than men resulting in decisions and processes that are different from the norm. They referred to this as a 3-D view resulting from women often being outsiders and bringing with them numerous socialized approaches needed for successful personal and professional navigation in administration. This was referred to as cognitive shift, which was sense-making or a reflective practice.

When discussing the characteristics that create roadblocks or hinder female leaders, Abigail referenced the lack of being reflective. She stated, "I use the phrase all the time, 'Look in the mirror.' I think that's the weakness in most human beings, to be quite honest. If you can't be reflective, you're going to have issues and not just in this occupation. The ability to go, 'Oh, I'm going to think about how I handled that one.' What could I have done differently, what am I going to do, what have I learned from this? Constant reflection. It makes you a better person. I think that women tend to be more reflective than males, sometimes too much." Betty mentioned the importance of reflectiveness in these terms, "knowing yourself, having a foundation to stand on when you unload the farm." She also referenced being happy or unhappy in a job and acquiring a "bag of tricks" in the job. Claire talked about treating people the way you would want to be treated, whether it was a teacher or parent. She indicated she was being reflective and that some of that "Comes with wisdom and experience. You know, I think what I might have done as a first year administrator would be different than what I would do now because you just kind of learn from experience that you've gotten yourself into and you think back, 'yeah, I could have done that differently.'" She then went on to add, "I think women are more reflective in leadership. I think we let it bother us. I think we think about it more. I still think about things. I

think, ‘Should I, could I, what would I have done.’ I sometimes find it harder to let go, that’s when I have to remind myself that it’s not going to matter a year from now just quit and let it go.” Delanie didn’t actually use the word reflective but referenced, “thinking more about if you talk too much, balance of communication, and gauge what that good balance of communication is.” She was very aware and cognizant of her role and how she is portrayed in all arenas of her work.

Stine (2004) talked about women having the courage to be self-reflective and deemed it a necessity for leaders in determining their next actions. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) stated, “Here we are a decade into the twenty-first century, and women are getting to a point where they can lead as they want to lead without explanation” (p. 97). Reflectiveness could be one of those woman-approaches to leadership in the principal role.

Theme 5: Each of the participants verbalized an awareness and the encountering of gender bias in their journey of secondary leadership; however, each of them spoke about not focusing or allowing these experiences to detour them. Each woman brought up gender and gave individual and distinct examples, circumstances, and contexts where she had encountered open and intentional gender discrimination. A surprise to me was how each woman brought up the gender issue but each with very different perspectives.

There is an abundance of literature on the inequities of males and females in every occupation. The literature reviewed for this study was 30 years old up to the present. Smith (1976) discussed the mindset and attitudes of society regarding women principals, “Attitudes toward women and family have not changed. Definitions of the family, perceptions of women and ideas about social function are left over from a time when they were necessary for social survival” (p. 101). Current literature such as *Lean In* by Sandberg has pointed out that women in

the United States are centuries ahead of the unacceptable treatment of women in other countries. However, knowing this should not stop us from trying to make things better. She candidly points out that over the past decades the percentage of women at the top of corporate America has barely budged. This is in spite of the increasing number women college graduates and growing number of women entering fields typically dominated by men.

I was curious to understand how the women of this study had endured in an occupation, such as education, that was predominately female and yet had limited numbers of successful women in the secondary principalship role. What I discovered was by far one of the most noteworthy themes and completely unexpected.

Abigail candidly discussed, “the games you have to play sometimes.” She said this in reference to attending all male principal meetings. She was aware from previous experiences women could be negatively viewed as, “cocky, a little pushy, or dominate the conversation.” She expressed her frustration with these meetings because, “I’d listen to these guys and I got this feeling that they had to do kind of a one-up-man ship. I’d be the one who would lean in and say, ‘you know, here’s what I get frustrated with.’ That’s how I’d put it and then I’d get a good reaction. I’d be often the one who would say what others were thinking but they wouldn’t say.” Abigail noted that she thought the men in these meetings were often reluctant to share what might not be going well and still be viewed with the necessary confidence to lead large buildings with large staffs. She talked about monitoring her airtime in these meetings or “clocking how much I talk.” On the other hand, she stated, “I absolutely felt I had to be the one to initiate those conversation starters sometimes because you knew it wouldn’t happen. Again, you’re the only woman sitting around the table. I mean they’re great guys, I could just see the weaknesses.” Abigail was not angry or resentful when reflecting on her experiences in all male principal

meetings. She was cognizant, mindful, and attentive to her behavior in these settings and paid attention to how she could be viewed and easily dismissed because of her gender.

Abigail casually mentioned the salary discrepancy she experienced within the district where she was the only female secondary principal. By some pay scale recalculating to attract two male out-of-state candidates to high school principal positions, she ended up being the lowest paid high school administrator in the district where she was the only female. Abigail said, “I was paid the least. I didn’t say anything. I did get a base salary hike and that was great but it was like, ‘Really?’” Even this discrepancy did not detour her from the work as she stated, “I have learned something from every single leader that I have worked with, male or female.”

Betty talked about two situations where she felt discriminated against. The first was in the 1990s, working in a district where an assistant principal job was created. She thought, “Ahh, this is made for me. So I went into the principal and said, ‘I am really interested in this position. And he said, ‘Betty, the school board will never hire a female administrator in this position.’ My feelings were hurt. I’m thinking, ‘I did all of this for you.’ So that summer an associate principal job came open in another district, so I applied, went to the interview and was offered the job.” Betty referenced another principal job that she applied for in another district. She did not get the job and while attending another meeting she said to someone sitting by her, “I’m interested to see what the new principal from that district has that I don’t. The person leaned over to me and said. ‘A zipper.’”

Betty candidly stated, “I think that there is a ‘good old boys network’ that is alive and well and I think that females are beginning to infiltrate it because I think education has changed. I don’t think it’s a default career anymore like I think sometimes people believe it is. Now we’ve really got business to do. It isn’t just about going in and teaching like we were taught. I

think districts are looking for something different. I think we have some ‘get ‘er done’ characteristics that we are able to pull off this kind of thing.” She later commented, “I think women have varying degrees of these characteristics, just as I think men have varying degrees of these characteristics, and I think you sometimes have to put a conscious effort into being the person that should be in that role. I don’t think that there is anything that make women any better at something that a man is good at if they have the same characteristics.” Betty did not focus on the inequity or discrimination that she encountered. She was determined to be the best she could be in the role that she strived to attain.

Claire was the by far the most articulate on the subject of males and females in secondary administration and her decision to not allow this to hinder her work. She was the principal in a private, religious school. Her comment was, “Well, they’re probably never going to hire a female. You talk about education being a hierarchy, the church is worse.” When asked specifically what has been the most difficult area to navigate she responded, “It’s probably just the whole boys’ club image. I guess that I just decided early on that’s not a battle I am going to fight. I am who I am. I bring my own strengths to the table. But it can be irritating. It was irritating to me as a teacher when all the coaches sat in the back of the room and I hate to be stereotypical but it hasn’t changed. It was irritating to me then and it’s irritating to me now as an administrator.” She referenced a recent meeting she attended that was all secondary principals and she was the only female. “We managed to get through what we were supposed to do and then, of course, the talk reverted back to sports teams. Even there. You expect more but maybe it’s the way we’re wired. I just decided long ago I wasn’t going to fight the battle but I just feel like it’s just tough to operate in a men’s world. I always think is this really going to matter a year from now? Is it really something I want to spend my energy on?” Claire talked about

experiencing, “lots of discrimination but probably more from the parents. Kids are pretty accepting but I think the parents are interesting. They just think that some roles should better be held by males. I know my president feels this way and it’s been a difficult thing. I think it’s more of a secondary thing because the way we approach things is different. I think a male decision is black and white. My decisions aren’t always black and white.” Later in the conversation she did comment, “Some men are the exception. My husband, who is an elementary teacher, and my former superintendent, who was the most caring man, not macho.” Her final thoughts on the subject was that if she was to give advice to women considering going into the profession of secondary principal, “I would encourage women to go into the field, but I think you have to look at this whole dynamic and decide if you’re going to fight battles or if you are going to go about your business. Are you going to go about your business, use your gifts, do the best you can do and let it go? Or are you going to fight for equality? I mean, you can do that if you want to, if that’s important, but I think if you’re going down that path, then you are going to waste a lot of energy that you could be giving to your students. I think there’s certainly reputable women in the higher role of education that are very well respected. I don’t know that they’ve fought the battles or if they have just used their gifts and been fair and honest. I think if you are fair and honest, then that’s the key.” It was apparent that Claire had made a conscious and deliberate decision how she would approach her position of leadership in regards to gender.

Delanie had a different perspective than the other women interviewed. She referred to gender bias as a single woman and from the coaching perspective. She talked about not getting a job because, “You just knew who was going to get the job. There were two males and you just knew they were being groomed even though you were given leadership opportunities.” She later addressed the topic of salary in relation to gender. She said, “The best way I can say it is I was

lowballed. I'm going to tell you I think it was because I was female. That's what they tried to do to my other assistant. He wasn't lowballed as bad as I was and I truly, truly believe it was because I was a woman." In reference to being hired as a high school assistant principal she said, "My first day on the job, I walked into the superintendent's office and he informed me that the high school principal did not want to hire me and that he wanted to hire one of the 'boys' in the school but the school board wouldn't accept that. So I had a challenge right away and I worked hard to develop a relationship with him." Later when discussing the community and participating in the Girls High School Athletic Union she said, "The other thing I was fighting was that poise. I don't like to get caught up into it but I watch it and I've seen it. I'm part of the Girls Athletic Union, and I love all the people that I'm with and that I work with but I also see what's going on there and how hard it is as a woman to crack into that. I have sat on that committee for four years, and I finally feel like I'm cracking where people respect what I have to say. It's taken some time, but for me it's been chipping away at developing relationships. It's mostly male. It's just that what I have to say is important and I've literally had to be very quiet and just sit back until they ask. My work in the Girls Union, with all the men, is if you talk too much you can be looked at as a smarty pants. It's finding that balance of communication and composure or I think you can appear to be weak."

In regard to her experiences in the coaching arena she noted, "I've seen male coaches yell at an umpire, and when the woman coach did it, nothing compared to our opponent, who was male. He almost threw her out. And then he almost threw me out and I just quietly went up to question him. You think of coaches of being someone that's aggressive and a motivator but they don't want that from a woman but it's acceptable from a male. I'm not a fluffy person but after the game we had to have a big, round circle hug and whatever. And that's basically how I truly

believe women have to coach now.” She later added that at the college level, “I’ve watched that change a little bit where it’s a little bit more acceptable for a woman coaching at the college level to be a bit more aggressive.”

Delanie offered additional insight on being a single woman in the field of educational administration by stating, “I really think that single women are easily taken advantage of. Sometimes I may have plans to go to a movie or something some weekend but then everybody else wants to go out of town so then my plans have to change. Everybody says, ‘Well, we want to really make sure that everybody gets their family time.’ It could be single men get the same thing but I will say that single people there is a big difference or expectation of what they can and can’t do.” One of the final statements that Delanie said clearly exemplifies this gender theme, “I’m not really this big feminist, and I’m not really big into that. I’m about, you know, doing what I think is right.”

All of the women experienced discrimination, prejudice, and unfairness in every realm of secondary leadership. The highlight, however, was that they were aware, had experienced it, and still focused on what was most important – the work. “In spite of all that has been said, some women do survive and become secondary administrators. A woman principal’s problems are not over once she has her position, since all of the problems mentioned will linger to some degree, and some new problems will arise. These new problems are not in her job description, but are problems that by their nature will affect the way she carries out her responsibilities” (Smith, 1976, p. 101).

Conclusions

The literature on the topic of gender disproportionality and discrimination is plentiful and exhaustive; however, most of the literature is concentrated on the discrepancy and disproportion

of women in management positions in all occupations as highlighted in the Chapter 2 Literature Review.

The shared characteristics that became growingly apparent were of particular interest to me as they aligned and were supported by past and present literature on the subject of women in administration.

1. Being the only female secondary principal in their district or conference
2. Vast amounts of experiences due to remaining in the teaching profession longer than their male counterparts
3. Each one was encouraged to pursue educational administration by an experience or someone else
4. The women interviewed were well read or aware of current literature related to education possibly due to their longevity in education overall
5. A family member or family experience served or influenced them in some educational capacity; teaching, superintendent, or school board member or school was the safe place

The following themes emerged clearly and consistently with each interview.

1. Each woman had the support of either a spouse, extended family, or a network of colleagues and/or friends
2. All participants considered interpersonal or social skills imperative and essential to being a successful principal
3. Every woman in this study was passionate about her work and articulated this on numerous occasions

4. The ability to be reflective and introspective were regarded as important characteristics for a truly effective and successful educational leader
5. The women were aware and had encountered discrimination in some form and each verbalized a conscious effort not to allow this to detour them from being effective

In every one of the interviews the women discussed a subject that was corroborated by the literature reviewed for this research and supported by the Critical Feminist Theory lens. I was astounded that each woman's story, experiences, and skills recommended were specifically referenced in the general literature reviewed on women in the workforce, not specific to business, military, higher education or public education. Metz and Moss (2008) discovered in a cross-sectional survey that women, more than men, had diminished managerial ambitions due to the responsibility of balancing family and work. Three of the women in this study entered the secondary principalship when their children were older or out of the house. The fourth woman was single with no children. This information about their family supported current research.

Sandberg (2013) expresses it best in her book *Lean In*, "Women rarely make one big decision to leave the workforce. Instead, they make a lot of small decisions along the way, making accommodations and sacrifices that they believe will be required to have a family" (p. 93). It was a prominent and significant correlation with the four participants in this study.

All of the women in this study openly talked about things like "watching their air time" or "balancing communication because if you talk too much you can be looked at as a smarty pants" and "gauge what's good communication." They all seemed to be mindful of the negative stereotypes that can create "double-bind" situations in which the dominant group criticizes or ostracizes the minority member (Demaniter & Adams, 2009). Females are forced to think first before deviating from expected behavior and often temper their reactions, responses, and

professional goals (Sandberg, 2013). Eagly and Carli (2007) would depict this dilemma faced by women in the workforce as a labyrinth or maze consisting of many barriers that must be negotiated.

What was of particular interest to me was how candidly the women spoke of the various situations they had encountered in their journey but did so without assigning blame or implying that this recognized discrimination had detoured them, made them less effective, or restrained them from success in their current role. In fact, the overall tone was that each woman was very aware there was gender bias or intolerance; however, they made deliberate and conscious choices to not expend their energies there, rather maneuver around the known barriers.

Eagly and Carli (2007) discussed the numerous obstacles that women confront in their path to leadership and suggested that women learn and apply a multitude of behavioral strategies to ease their route through the labyrinth. Sandberg (2013) indicates one of the contributors to the underrepresentation of women in administrative or management positions has been labeled Leadership Ambition Gap. Essentially, this means that even among the most highly educated men and women, men are more ambitious about reaching managerial jobs than women. Sandberg (2013, p. 27) uses the term as “sitting at the table” when she discusses women believing in their own abilities and facing fearful situations. She characterizes this term as not holding back or watching from the sidelines. She insists that women should not allow internal or institutional barriers to keep them from reaching out for opportunities, being overly cautious about changing roles, and to continue seeking out new challenges.

Christman (2007) insisted that women often find themselves fenced in by societal expectations regarding gender. Women must then slide around and over barbs in the wire

adopting various approaches to leadership and move fluidly between gender norms. The ability to traverse gender norms creates resiliency within academic leadership.

Eagly and Carli (2007) articulated, “To become leaders, women must navigate through the labyrinth, overcoming barriers and dead ends along the way. Ideally, there would be no labyrinth, and women and men would have the same paths to leadership. But currently, the male path is more direct, and the female one more labyrinthine. Clearly, women cannot resolve the problems presented by the labyrinth on their own” (p. 161).

Implications

There were some issues referenced during the research study and face-to-face interviews that generated suggestions or ideas for follow-up would be fitting

1. It would appear necessary to continue to review what specifically hinders women from moving up the ladder into administrative or management jobs. If, in fact, there are hindrances as the glass ceiling or sticky floor, what can be done to remove these external barriers? Simply put, creating an accommodating workplace and schedule that suits females who are largely responsible for childcare and/or dependent care and who are a large part of the workforce. The access and cost of affordable and dependable childcare is an issue that often finds women leaving the workplace as a necessary choice, thus making women choose between a career and family (Sandberg, 2013). When this occurs, “Only 74 percent of professional women will rejoin the workforce and only 40 percent will return to full-time jobs” (Sandberg, 2013, p. 102). According to Sandberg, “Women face real obstacles in the professional world...too few workplaces offer the flexibility and access to childcare and parental leave that are necessary for pursuing a career while raising children” (p. 8). Over the last thirty years the data have not fluctuated much as

more than 50 percent of the women surveyed at a leading university still anticipate work-family conflict requiring them leaving their career to raise children (Sandberg, 2013). It is the responsibility of each member of the educational environment, especially those in administration, to provide thoughtful suggestions and advocate reformation to ensure more hospitable and family-friendly changes in the workplace (Eagly and Carli, 2007).

The women in this study were typical of what the past and present literature articulates in that they were older when they endeavored to pursue a career in educational administration. The accommodating schedules and work calendar of classroom teacher kept them in that position longer than their male colleagues. Therefore, when they entered the secondary principalship, childcare was not a major issue. The expectation for women to leave the workplace or delay career advancement should be a personal choice, not forced upon a woman because of outdated, formally structure workplaces, the cost of affordable and dependable childcare, or social convention.

2. It should be the effort of all professional men and women to work towards eliminating the stereotype of the bad working mom. Women are often encouraged and esteemed by society for dropping out of the workplace for family. The stereotype of the workingwoman as depicted by commercials and movies is rarely attractive. Popular culture portrays successful workingwomen in various negative ways; overly consumed, ruthless, negligent, unorganized, guilt ridden, stressed or frazzled by their career (Sandberg, 2013). An unappealing stereotype does not promote or encourage women to seek management or administrative positions. This is an incredibly subtle social message that can and does discourage women from striving for career advancement.

The women in this study were well aware of the harmful stereotypes for professional females. Various references to this topic were woven throughout our conversations. Although the negative stereotypes did not detour them, it did cause each one of them to strategically plan their comments, interactions, and even appearance in most settings.

3. Graduate programs should be encouraged to address the skill set needed for women intending to pursue secondary administration and not to be fearful of being female in a predominately male career. Current literature clearly articulates that the skill set needed in the 21st century work environment are characteristics and attributes that are typically thought of as feminine – sensitivity, sympathy, and bringing out the best in people (Wyatt, 1992).

While current graduate programs for school administrators do offer classes on leadership and policy development, building leadership, and school/community relations; they do not specifically address the challenges encountered related to gender. Professors and institutions of higher learning need to speak candidly and honestly regarding the current statistics on educational administration and gender. The subject should be discussed in open dialogue, and at the same time offer specific strategies needed for leadership for females and males. Not addressing them or reflecting upon the current data is feigning ignorance and ultimately inadequately preparing potential administrators for challenges they will definitely encounter. Addressing the discrepancy in an open manner and reviewing the current data could potentially change the internship programs offered at universities and the mentoring programs offered by the state.

In order to assure that institutions of higher learning address and put into practice courses that specifically address gender, the Department of Education requirements for leadership offerings must be addressed. The Department of Education mandates requirements for all schools within the state. Acknowledging the underrepresentation of females in educational leadership and offering the support and training needed would encourage equity and balance and ensure universities follow through.

The women participants of this study seemed to figure out the necessary skill set for women secondary principals out on their own. Not one of them mentioned any class, colleague, or friend who coached or mentored them on this particular topic. How many additional women would pursue secondary administration or stay in secondary administration if they were given the tools and/or skill set in their preparation programs in advance? Being informed of the current data on women in secondary administration, knowing the potential hurdles they would encounter, and looking at past and present literature that articulates helpful skills and strategies to implement could potentially change the imbalance of gender in secondary administration.

Recommendations for further study

Although several topics were discussed and of interest to me during the interviews, one topic that was revisited in every interview were the hurdles encountered by each woman while pursuing a job in secondary principalship.

1. The hurdles encountered were usually unexpected and startlingly consistent. The hurdle of access to positions blocked by either a school board, current male administrators, or search firm was discussed. Although it seems logical that women would be proportionally represented in the field of education, which is 75 percent female, this is not the current state. Data demonstrating the increase of women in

educational administration over the years has changed slightly but not to the degree one would anticipate in the 21st century. Sandberg (2013) asserts that there are many contributors to this “winnowing” and during the face-to-face interviews with participants of this study this became apparent. The women had encountered explicit and covert blocks to career advancement usually occurring from those responsible for hiring. This funnel or narrow pipeline (Eagly and Carli, 2007) into career advancement is understood and unsurprising to most professional women.

The fact of funneling or narrow pipeline has been researched extensively, although mostly by women or persons of color. Often this type of qualitative research is trivialized and considered a threat to the status quo and is usually accomplished through the process of dissertation, which reaches a limited audience (Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011). Additional research related to this topic would be advantageous to women contemplating a career as a secondary principalship. Providing this information at the graduate level for women could potentially assist them in navigating the potential barriers they may encounter.

“The laws of economics and many studies of diversity tell us that if we tapped the entire pool of human resource and talent, our collective performance would improve.

Legendary investor Warren Buffett has stated generously that one of the reasons for his great success was that he was competing with only half of the population. When more people get into the race, more records will be broken. And the achievements will extend beyond those individuals to benefit us all” (Sandberg, 2013, p. 7).

2. As mentioned in earlier chapters the research on secondary female principalship is limited. There are, however, studies available on the general subject of principals, skill sets, and women superintendents in different states and countries. It would be

interesting and informative to do a similar study of a select group of women secondary principals in other states to determine if the journeys, career navigation, perceptions of female characteristics upon leadership (positive and negative) were comparable. Having multiple research studies on this topic with a similar sample group would make available numerous data sources that could be cross-reference and provide a stronger defense and justification regarding how and why the current educational system is disproportionate in gender leadership.

3. Additional studies into the hiring practices and criteria used by school boards and educational search companies would be an additional recommendation for further research. According to Marie C. Wilson (2004), “If we intend to dismantle the barriers to women’s leadership, one of the first we should tackle is the authority. It’s not so easy, especially when our society upholds ‘the masculinity of authority and the authority of masculinity.’” In the book *Sacred Dreams: Women and the Superintendency* (1999), a chapter written by Blount gives an historical account of how the system of appointing superintendents came into practice which significantly halted and ultimately reduced the number of women in educational leadership positions. Surprisingly, this occurred in the late 1800s and early 1900s and women’s exclusion in male political networking due to gender is identified as the cause. Not much has changed in a century in educational leadership.

A recommendation for further study would be makeup and training of educational search companies and district school boards. As Brunner (1999) points out, the local school boards and search companies are frequently the gatekeepers in the search

process for a superintendent, which appears to be applicable to the principalship position as well.

Summary

The reality is that women lead differently and are increasingly making their way into educational leadership positions. “But proportionally, women are still poorly represented the secondary principalship and the superintendency in the K-12 arena. One reason (they are poorly represented) appearing over and over in the literature is that women do not want to lead the way their male role model lead” (Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 41).

Women do not approach leadership from the top down. They are comfortable with informal power positions. They tend to demonstrate a shared and collective form of leadership with the outcome of building capacity in others and view themselves in relationship with others rather than in charge of others. Women form webs rather than pyramids in their institutional structures (Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011). “Women prefer to see themselves working together with those they lead and this is compared to being at the center of the spokes of the wheel rather than out in front pulling the wagon” (p. 46).

Women should not be frightened or discouraged from attaining secondary principalships due to stereotypical misrepresentation; rather they should aspire to, “Learn to become a leader through reflective thought and thinking. Know who you are, what you stand for, how you’re wired and what you are all about and then celebrate it” (Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 14-15). Contrary to presenting a measured persona to fit a preconceived stereotype, use passion to motivate those you work with and yourself. This requires the courage to persevere and overcome and enlightening others regarding the decades of culturally entrenched gender stereotypes.

Women should take the initiative and seek out or create support and/or networks with other professional alike women or men. Sandberg (2013) compares this to a jungle gym rather than a ladder. Career ladders are limiting only offering up or down, on or off. A more contemporary analogy is the jungle gym, which provides many creative ways to maneuver and get to the top. This model benefits women who are being blocked by external barriers or who have encountered other hurdles. Seek out mentors, whether formal or informal, but don't wait impassively for the relationship. Mentorship or sponsorship could be an informal peer or colleague or an official program. Joining and participating in networks create social capital. Networks can provide emotional support, contacts, job leads, work-related advice, and reduce feelings of isolation (Eagly and Carli, 2007).

At one time women were not accepted as leaders unless they acted like men, only to learn that acting like a man was not only uncomfortable but, for themselves, unlikely to be successful. Now women are changing the ideas about appropriate leadership models just by being themselves. (Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 97)

Leadership roles have changed. It's no longer about emulating masculine or feminine traits; it's about being authentic (Eagly and Carli, 2007).

Sociologist, Mary Waters was quoted in *Through the Labyrinth* (Eagly and Carli, 2007), "A strong leader is not just someone who can name a goal or force a change, but someone who can bring out the best in people and find ways to encourage teamwork" (p. 159). The conclusion reached based on the face-to-face interviews with the female secondary principals and the supporting current literature on female leadership, affirmed that the research participants were women who demonstrated these characteristics therefore able to maintain successful careers.

The changes required for leadership have produced new pressures on male leaders to learn culturally feminine skills. Recruiters are recommending that men and women take on the qualities of the other gender. In many contemporary environments, the best managers manifest both traditionally masculine and traditionally feminine qualities (Eagly and Carli, 2007).

The requirements for successful leadership in all arenas are changing due to a changing economy. Bella Abzug, feminist activist and former Congressional Representative said, “In my heart, I believe women will change the nature of power rather than power changing the nature of women” (Eagly and Carli, 2007, p. 163). Sandberg (2013) eloquently states, “Conditions for all women will improve when there are more women in leadership roles giving strong and powerful voice to their needs and concerns” (p. 7). Clearly, the women participants in this study demonstrated the characteristics and attributes needed for female success in a secondary principal position.

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Appendix A. Drake University Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

Institutional Review Board
2507 University Ave, Des Moines, IA 50311
irb@drake.edu



|
Date: May 30, 2013
From: Charisse Busing, IRB Chair
To: Linda Rouleau-Carroll
Re: **IRB Proposal #: 2012-13054**

Your expedited application for research titled "**Attributes and characteristics that contribute to successful female leadership in secondary education**" has been reviewed and has received **approval**.

The approval period is from 5/30/2013 to 5/30/2014

If any changes are made to the protocol or if you plan to continue the study beyond the approval date, notify the IRB. Should you intend to continue your study beyond the approved time period, please submit an application to the IRB no later than **one month before the expiration date** to ensure compliance and continued data collection. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Charisse M. Busing".

Charisse M. Busing
Associate Professor of Biology
IRB Chair 2012-2013

Appendix B. Recruitment Letter for Study Participants

Dear _____,

A colleague recently suggested you as a possible participant for my study. I believe we have been in some meetings together over the years, although you may not know who I am.

I have recently completed the coursework in the doctorate program at Drake University and am ready to begin my research. The topic of my study is Attributes and Characteristics that Contribute to Successful Female Leadership in Secondary Education. Your name was suggested to me by one of your colleagues for an interview on this topic. I believe you are a highly respected female leader and your insight on this subject is timely and relevant.

I know you are busy but I was hoping that you might be available for an interview on the topic of women in leadership sometime in June or July. The interview would be approximately 45 minutes. I would be more than willing to meet at your convenience- wherever and whenever is best for you.

I have attached the Consent Form for you to review as it will provide additional information regarding: confidentiality, anonymity, and record keeping.

If this is something that you would be willing and available to do, I would be so appreciative. I can be reached by email, as listed below, or I can be contacted by cell at (515) 313-7926.

Thank you in advance. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Linda Carroll

Appendix C. Informed Consent Form

Consent to Participate in Research and Authorization to use and disclose information

Research Study: Attributes and characteristics that contribute to successful female leadership in secondary education.

Researcher: Linda K. Rouleau-Carroll, Doctoral Candidate, Educational Leadership, School of Education, Drake University

Thank you for your interest in participating in this academic study. The objectives of the project are to gain an understanding of your experiences as a female educational leader and to add to the body of work that is currently limited.

The purpose of this form is to provide you with information so that you may decide whether you would like to participate in this study and to inform you of how the collected information may be used or disclosed both during the study and after the study is completed.

As a participant in this case study, you will undergo a one-hour face-to-face interview. The interview will be recorded using an iPad®. The recording will be transcribed. I will provide you with a transcription of the interview, which I will ask you to review for accuracy. By signing below you give consent for me to use your words and phrases in scholarly publications and presentations, with the understanding that I will attribute those words and phrases to you by pseudonym only, and that you will be listed, by pseudonym, as an “interview subject” in any bibliographic record included in my work.

In order to safeguard your identity, I will keep all interview data confidential. Real names, district name, or time of employment will not be used in the written case study. Pseudonyms will be used for participants that are directly quoted to protect confidentiality. All interviews and transcripts will be kept on my hard-drive and password protected. As well, you will be quoted in publication by pseudonym only; however, these interviews are not anonymous – your name will appear on this consent form, and I will send the transcripts to you for review.

The information obtained during this project will be used to write a case study, which may be read by my academic committee, and the transcriptionist.

You have the right to withdraw at anytime from the study, for any reason, and the data collected will not be used in the study unless it has already been made public through presentation or publication.

There are no foreseen risks associated with participation in this study. You may feel some feelings of self-consciousness when being interviewed; however, your involvement is voluntary, and you may stop the interview at any time.

There is no direct benefit to you. The information obtained from this research could aid in designing best practices for teacher education and facilitate professional development for secondary principalship.

The information will be maintained for three years at which time all data will be destroyed.

Participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will incur no penalty, and you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

I, _____, agree to this interview, and agree that it can be taped. I understand that I will have the opportunity to review the transcriptions of this interview for accuracy. I understand that Linda Carroll will use my words and phrases in scholarly publications and presentations, and that she will attribute those words and phrases to me by pseudonym only.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Respondent Contact Information:

I, Linda Carroll agree that I will give _____ the opportunity to review the transcriptions of this interview for accuracy. I will use the words and phrases in those transcriptions only for scholarly and pedagogical purposes. I will attribute all quotes to the respondent by pseudonym only. I will keep this data confidential prior to publication, and will take all reasonable steps to minimize potential risks to the subject.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Researcher Contact Information:

Linda Carroll lcarroll@wg.k12.ia.us. Telephone: (515) 313-7926

Should you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, please feel free to contact the Drake University Institutional Review Board, irb@drake.edu 515-271-3472

Appendix D. Interview Questions

Attributes and Characteristics that Contribute to Successful Female Leadership in Secondary Education Qualitative Research Multiple Case Study

1. Tell me about your journey in education and what you feel has contributed to your success as a female leader.
 - Examples?
2. What has been the most difficult area to navigate?
 - Predominately female and a higher ratio of males in leadership?
3. What are the characteristics that are uniquely female that contribute, influence, impact or make a difference in a leadership role?
4. In your opinion, what are the characteristics that create roadblocks or hinder female leaders?
5. What didn't I ask that you want to comment on?

Appendix E. Transcription Coding Table

Question 1	Abigail	Betty	Claire	Delanie
Tell me about your journey in education and what you feel has contributed to your success as a female leader?	1 Hardworker	Didn't have aspirations to be adm - liked	Taught for 17 years before pursuing	School very important to her - her safe place
	2 Passionate	Advanced degrees prior to adm	Learned to be collaborative	Did lots of extras (GT, MS Math, coached)
	3 Stayed at home with kids	Denied job cause she was a woman	Dad was in education BOE	8 years, 5 years, then asst. principal
	4 Surrounded self with good teachers	Agonized over decision for vp due to	Encouraged to pursue admin	Applied for asst. principal where she was but she
	5 Balancing career with parenting	Children grown when went into adm.	MA in admin while husband taught	Lowballed in first adm job
	6 Back to school when kids older for adm	Followed husbands career path, not her own	Knew she wouldn't relocate for	Found out from supt that principal didn't want to
	7 Others recognized leadership in me	Did lots of extra things besides teaching	Influence by male supt who focused	Tough first year- lots to clean up
	8 Women get this - PLC (4 Cs - p.5)	Collaboration	Was sure she wouldn't get principal	Personal and school issues created lots of stress
	9 Encouraged by others to pursue adm	Husband in education	Felt led to her job	Lowballed again in head principal job, same
	10 Didn't see instructional leaders modeled	Did everything at previous job (counselor)	Commuting due to family situations	Was told "lowballed now your going to be
	11 Humility		Would not have taken job if her	Her asst. increased because he had a family
	12 Didn't have aspirations to be adm - liked		Husband in education	Will keep the lowball forever in mind for her next
	13 Did lots of extra things besides teaching (took		Did everything at beginning job (sped	Think the low salary was because she was
	14 Husband in education		Lots to clean up in first year	13 years in administration (asst & princ)
	15 Lots to clean up first year	20+ years in adm (asst & principal)	20+ years in adm	Quiet in meetings unless asked
	** Mentioned dropout rate and no one concerned	Mentioned districts looking for something	Mentioned working at a alternative	Mentioned migrant workers and children and
Question 2				
What has been the most difficult area to navigate?	1 Wasn't family cause youngest in college (7)	Applied for principal job and didn't get it	Boys club image & not a battle I'm	Motivating other women (teachers & mothers). I
	2 It was the multidimensional parts- prepared for	I think there is a "good ol' boy network that	I bring my own strengths	Mothers are mean & its hard to develop a rapport
	3 Difficult if you don't have a good adm team	Females are infiltrating cause education is	It can be irritating. It was irritating to	Discussed how women coaches are treated by
	4 Really good communication skills with	characteristic that are important aren't	I hate to be stereotypical but it hasn't	Most difficult to navigate is putting on a mask
	5 Have to have a certain temperament	Admin has historically been coaches	Maybe it's the way we are wired- not	Developing that trust with women and valuing
	6 Blessed to have good experience that served	We've got some "get er done"	Empathy important. Her own children	Gotten older, it's gotten easier
	7 CIA - had lots of credibility		There's more men in education. If i	Relationships - harder with women, they make
	8 Values good teachers = good principal		Discrimination exist but thinks it's	
	9 Just cause your good at communicating with		We (women) approach things	
	10 Have the skills and acquire skills through		Treat kids and teachers with a sense	
	11 Communication piece critical- comm		Some of it is the way we are wired	
	12 Respect others, even poor teachers		Women can be like that too but the	
	**Talked about parent issues	**Talked about parent interactions	**Talked about parent issues	**Talked about parents, especially mothers
Question 3				
What are the characteristics that are uniquely female that contribute, influence, impact or make a difference in a	1 Humility - meetings with male principals they	My characteristics - protector, supporter,	Empathy but it's not uniquely female	Intuitive
	2 Wisdom- older you get wiser you get - able to	Willing to take the criticism and move on	Lead with the heart more than the	Better at making relationships
	3 Being transparent- sometimes I think that's	Guys or gals - don't be a good ol' boy - live	More patience	Bit of humor
	4 Need to talk, need to get feedback. Men don't	Listener- educational & personal. Be	Accept input and accept opinion	Intuitiveness & reading people "little voice"
	5 Doesn't want to dominate conversation, clock	Visionary- change not for change sake but	Managerial vs instructional leader not	Listening skills. Women tend to listen and hear
	6 Felt her colleagues were great guys, some	Organization is key - women are good at	Find it easier to be more collaborative	Interpersonal skills and bringing, giving people to
	7 Feels people jump into principalship too soon.	Develop a plan and work it (7)	Willing to listen	Women have to work harder than everyone else
	8	Collaborate & bring people along	Women are wired for relationships	
	9	Pay attention to details, anticipate what	Women are the main nurturers due to	
	10	Have to manage time & people to be	Dealing with parents with a	
	11	Instructional leaders have to get out and	Reflective in leadership	
	12	Instructional leaders are coming into their	Overthink things - would have done	
	** Interpersonal skills - humility, transparent,	Interpersonal skills mentioned - listener,	Interpersonal skills mentioned-	Interpersonal skills mentioned - listening,
Question 4				
In your opinion, what are the characteristics that create	1 Navigating personal & professional life,	Courage and cannot be intimidated by	Caregiver issues - either with parents,	Composure of emotions or seen as weak**
	2 Too cocky and no humility**	See oneself as protector & stand your	Districts are blessed to have a female	Not talking too much - finding the balance of
	3 Not nurturing or developing collective capacity	Maintaining demeanor & not making	Bring up things from my (womans)	Its that whole instinct thing
	4 Games women feel that have to play	Stand firm, take a stand	People are getting into administration	Being succinct and to the point in
	5 Being a reader of educational stuff	Positioning yourself in your office to portray	Adm. too young decisions are made	Appearance - women are criticized for it more
	6 Lack of reflectiveness or ability to rethink how		Later end of career so see things	
	**Demeanor	**Demeanor	Female perspective- demeanor	**Demeanor
Question 5				
What didn't I ask that you want to comment on?	1 I've learned something from every single	Have to make a conscious effort (male or	Love his kids. Just kids in bigger	Women have to work harder to prove themselves
	2 Ready for change but leaving is hard. Leaving	You have to control your head and your	Whats tiring is dealing with parents,	Participating in principals groups and "chipping
	3 Its not the energy its the night events. I don't	Women are instructional leaders rather than	I would encourage women to go into	Single women are easily taken advantage of
	4	If you're really good at the secondary	Use your gifts, be the best that you	Working 7 days a week and burnt, needing a
	5	If I didn't have to work nights, I would have	Dont waste time on equity or	
	6	Have to be a worker bee	Being fair and honest and using your	
	7	Have to never be satisfied with the status		
	8	Collaborate and work with your Five Stars		
	9	Let the dogs bark at you and walk away.		
	10	Watch for the details because everybody is		
	11	Have to have tough skin		
	12	You've got to love it. If not, its not the job for		
	13	Commented on the several groups of friends		
	14	Others don't view an administrator as an		
	15			
Common themes throughout	Commonalities - 25 total patterns		Some similarities	
	All were from Iowa		A connection to education by family	
	All talked about family in some manner		Appearance	
	All had some family connection to education		All from home state	
	All talked about relationships/support in some		Three not suggested by literature	
	All talked candidly about discrimination they		5 emerging Themes	
	All chose not to focus on the barrier but be		Support of others	
Common themes throughout	All were introspective and reflective. Referred		Interpersonal skills deemed important	
	Passionate about making a difference, kids		Passionate about their work	
			Reflective	
				Awareness of gender bias but didn't allow it to

Appendix F. Transcriptionist IRB Certification

Protecting Human Subject Research Participants

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